Religion IN RUSSIA

AN UNCENSORED ACCOUNT

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From Lenin to Khrushchev

An Uncensored Account

By

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Biographical Sketch of the Author

Leopold L. S. Braun, A. A., is an American Assumptionist who acquired international fame following his assignment to the Soviet Union as chaplain to American Catholics at the time of the USSR's diplomatic recognition by the United States. Father Braun was stationed in Moscow, the seat of Soviet atheism where, besides carrying on his chaplaincy, he became pastor of the Church of Saint-Louis-des Français; he also exercised for more than a decade the functions of Apostolic Administrator. His entry into Russia was made possible by the Roosevelt-Litvinov USA — USSR Religious Protocol guaranteeing freedom of conscience for American nationals residing in the Soviet Union, an agreement presently violated by the USSR.

Father Braun's thorough knowledge of the Russian language coupled with his constant daily and direct contacts with the people and with officialdom, qualify him as an authority on the Soviet question. At no time did the American chaplain depend on official reports or on the interpretation of guides for his knowledge of true conditions in Soviet Russia. Despite five successive robberies in his church, two automobile "accidents," a spectacular, trumped-up charge of assault and battery with ensuing trial, and innumerable other annoyances placed in his path, Father Braun achieved the distinction of remaining at his post for twelve uninterrupted years. Under five continuing American ambassadors before, all during and after World War II, he remained in the

Soviet capital, witnessing many unreported scenes of historical importance.

Father Braun's dramatic exit from Russia alive and safe was due only to the providential and protective courtesy of the then Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes. Plans of the Soviet secret police for the American chaplain's departure from the USSR with no point of arrival were foiled by the services of a C-54 Skymaster manned by an American crew flying the American Delegation back to Washington. Since his return from Russia, Father Braun has traveled extensively in Europe several times and has visited other continents, lecturing and gathering material for the Assumptionist Russian Research and Missionary Development, which he directs in New York.

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Who Worships in Russia Today?

The Christian world at large, as well as all nations professing belief in God, have never ceased showing interest in the religious situation of Russia. Long before Sir Winston Churchill first made mention of the "iron curtain," Russia was already enveloped in mystery and secrecy regarding its internal evolution. More particularly, the now more than forty-year-old conflict going on between the religious convictions of the peoples of Russia and the atheistic regime in power, has become systematically beclouded. Only a bare trickle of reliable news has emanated from the USSR in all those years. In part because of rigid censorship, foreign opinion concerning Russia has become the prey of chaotic, confused thinking, more particularly so regarding freedom of conscience in that country.

Ever since the year 1943, when Stalin was compelled to favor the election of a Patriarch, giving the Church only a semblance of liberty while it remained rigidly controlled by the Kremlin, interested observers have been asking themselves: What does all this mean? Truly speaking, is there any religious freedom in Russia? Do Russians still worship after all these years of repressive persecution? Do people still go to church? Are there any churches left open to divine worship? What are the

conditions under which the remaining clergy may exercise their sacred functions?

The purpose of this writing is to answer all these questions, all the while elaborating with some detail on heretofore-unrevealed aspects of religion in Sovietland. The facts to be related will be based in part on some research, to place the topic in its proper historical perspective. Most of this writing, however, will be founded on the author's first-hand experiences in Russia, where he lived consecutively for twelve years. A stronger plea for the reader's credence might be invited if it is known that the author does possess a thorough reading, writing and speaking knowledge of the Russian language. Mention is made of this to exclude the thought that this knowledge could have been obtained through inspired guides, paid interpreters or a walled-in, ivory-tower-type assimilation of the events to be related.

The Patriarchate and the Faiths of Russia

A clear and intelligent understanding of the religious situation in present-day Russia can be arrived at only by acquainting oneself first of all with a general picture of religious faith in that land up to the fall of czarism.

All students of Russian history know that the predominant religion in the Soviet Union is the commonly called Greek Orthodox faith. This is explained by the fact that its doctrinal and ceremonial traditions were inherited from Byzantium in the tenth century. The principal liturgies in use are those elaborated by St. John

Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great, both Greek Fathers of the Church.

It was only in 1589 that Metropolitan Job of Moscow became Patriarch, having been elevated to that supreme function by Jeremias II, Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, who visited Russia during that year in search of funds. From that period on, the Russian Orthodox Church has enjoyed full autonomy, all the while keeping its spiritual ties with the Mother Dissident Church of Constantinople.

Historians of the Byzantine period could have insisted a bit more, it seems, on the fact that the secular power was intimately and in some instances inseparably linked with ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Dating back to Constantine the Great, traces of this intermingling, and at times conflicting, secular and ecclesiastical influence are to be found in successive history chapters of the Eastern Church. Down to the last days of the Romanoffs, czarist Russia fits completely into this picture.

As the saying goes, Peter the Great (1672-1725) made history in more ways than one. Not the least of his innovations in what up to his time had been the isolated but rapidly expanding Russian Empire, was his ukase abolishing the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. Up until the reign of Peter I, who became imbued with Western ideas as a result of his journeys to France, Germany and Holland, the Russian Orthodox Church had been governed by a Patriarch who was looked upon and who acted as sole supreme head of the entire Orthodox hier-

archy. This comprised both the black (regular-monastic) and the white (secular-parish) clergy. When Peter began introducing his reforms, opposition was met with on the part of certain Russian Orthodox clerics. The Patriarch being the main obstacle in the path of this westernization, the Emperor simply suppressed the Patriarchate (1721). In its place Peter established a Holy Synod composed mainly of metropolitans, archbishops and bishops. Its general structure was somewhat modeled on the Lutheran synods such as Peter had seen in operation in Germany.

This step naturally brought the Russian Orthodox Church closer to secular power, since the Holy Synod right up to the time of Nicholas II was presided over by a layman appointed by the Czar, with the title of Procurator General. Thus, while introducing a great number of social, economic, military and governmental reforms to modernize shut-in Russia, Peter at the same time was welding together, so to speak, temporal and spiritual powers. He perpetuated the ancient Byzantine custom of tying in State and Church to such an extent that the system developed into Cesaro-papism. This regrettable situation, complained of even by the Russian philosopher Vladimir S. Soloviev, must be borne in mind in studying the indescribable upheaval suffered by the Russian Orthodox Church — and all other religions in Russia, for that matter — at the advent of the Bolshevist-Communist regime.

When Nicholas II signed his abdication (1917), Russian Orthodoxy was not only the predominant faith practiced in the Empire; it was also a much-privileged religion. For a long time, anyone born in Orthodoxy had been forced to embrace that faith. It was forbidden by imperial law to join any other religion. All important acts of State were accompanied by Orthodox religious ceremonies in which the Patriarch or, in later years, the Metropolitan Guardian of the Patriarchal Throne, participated. All armed forces of the Empire had their Orthodox chaplains. Fortresses, military academies and barracks all had their chapels. So did schools, academies, gymnasiums (in continental Europe, a term for advanced secondary schools) and universities, where the *Bozhie zakon* (Bible and Sunday school classes) and the teaching of Church Slavonic (Orthodox liturgical tongue) were obligatory. Oaths were invariably administered in the name of God. Only religious marriages were recognized. Orthodoxy being the Established Church, a christening record was equivalent to a birth certificate for all civil purposes.

Thanks to accumulated conquests in the Far East, vast populations of Tatars became Russian subjects. Likewise, Protestants from the Baltic regions and Catholics from the Western borders, including Poland, Little Russia, White Russia and parts of Western Ukraine gradually became nationals of what was the Russian Empire before the Treaty of Versailles. From Peter the Great's time

through the reign of Catherine II, right down to Nicholas II, millions of new subjects of non-Orthodox faith were added to Russia's ever-increasing population. This necessitated important but complicated modifications in the religious laws of the Empire. These laws were characterized mainly by a superficial spirit of tolerance, which actually remained inoperative. Privileges were enjoyed only by adherents of the Russian Orthodox religion. However, in private or public schools, non-Orthodox children could still be taught religion by any recognized non-Orthodox priest, pastor, rabbi or mullah. Jews were not allowed to live outside designated quarters. Nonetheless they could worship in accordance with their accepted traditions. In old Moscow, German Lutherans were relegated to that section of the city called the *Nemietskaya Sloboda* (German suburb). It is worth while pointing out here that the first Germans to penetrate into Russia centuries ago, being unable to speak the Russian language, were called *Nemtsi,* literally meaning those who are dumb or unable to speak. Because of this ancient practice, to this day the proper word in the Russian language to designate a German is *Nemets,* although the word *Germaniets* is also used, but less commonly.

The records of the St.-Louis-des-Français Church, of which this writer was pastor in Moscow, show that the imperial ukase allowing its establishment was signed on December 5, 1789 (Julian calendar). It is stipulated in this document that authorization is granted to the petitioners, nearly all of whom were refugees from the

French Revolution: " . . . to build a church for the French colony and for any whose mother tongue is French." Mention is here made of this to show the care exercised by the imperial government of the time to protect its nationals from non-Orthodox religious influence.

In spite of the rigid control to which Orthodox worshipers were subjected both by the privileges and restraints of the imperial laws, other organized faiths managed to develop within specified limitations. On the eve of the October Revolution, Protestantism was mainly represented in Western European Russia by a closely knit group of Lutheran congregations whose adepts were mostly of German descent. Settlements of such Germans, invited to Russia by Catherine II, herself a German, had gone far afield. Some of these Lutheran parishes existed as far inland as the tip of the Volga River. Intermarrying and speaking nothing but German, these people had their customs, language, folklore and religious practices safeguarded by the devoted Lutheran bishops and pastors who followed them into Russia. In time to come, their clergy was recruited and trained in Russia. Their seminaries, congregations and parishes extended from St. Petersburg (Leningrad) to Odessa from north to south, and from Riga to Samara (Kuibyshev), from east to west. The Baltic Republics, with the exception of Lithuania, were Evangelical in the main. Other important Protestant denominations such as the Baptists, the Reformed Church and a few Seventh Day Adventists were spread out in this same area. Anglicanism was never too plentifully

represented in Russia except for St. Petersburg, the former capital and Moscow. It also had dispersed chapels and missions in the North. These were populated by English engineers and their families, who had been employed prior to the revolution in textile and metallurgical enterprises. Moscow formerly had a beautiful Anglican church dedicated to St. Andrew. At the time of this writer's stay in Moscow, this Anglican church had been transformed into a wood-working shop and dormitory.

As to Catholicism, represented in Russia under the three distinct rites of the Latin, Eastern (Byzantine) and Armenian observances, its numerical importance figured in third order. Prior to the October Revolution, there existed three Catholic dioceses; and following the Treaty of Versailles, portions of two other ecclesiastical territories were enclosed within the boundaries of what then became the USSR. May the reader be reminded that important territories and populations gained their independence from Russian rule at the close of World War I. These included the former Grand Duchy of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Finland and the three Republics of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. Of these five, only Finland today (1959) retains its independence. These territorial transmutations must not be lost sight of in appreciating the religious situation in the Soviet Union of today. Events have happened with such rapidity and frequency that history and geography manuals have become outdated the moment they were published.

In most of the "annexed" territories absorbed by the USSR since 1939, the predominant non-Orthodox faith involved, numerically speaking, has been Catholicism under one or the other of the above-named rites. Armenian Catholics, not to be confused with Gregorian-Armenians, developed principally on the inner USSR shores of the Black and Caspian Seas. Eastern-rite Catholics, numbering between six and seven million, populated much of the 1939 Western borders of the USSR and reached inland straight through to the depths of the Ukraine. Supreme religious authority for Catholics of the Eastern rite resided in a Metropolitan whose see was located in the now USSR-absorbed city of Lwow (Lemberg). As to Roman Catholicism properly speaking of the Latin rite, it was plentifully represented by completely organized schools, churches and parish houses in practically every important city of European and Asiatic Russia when Lenin seized power.

Islamism, whether in imperial Russia or under the Soviet regime, deserves particular attention, were it only for the fact that Moslems constitute a good fifth of Russia's population. Let no one diminish the importance of Mohammedanism in the Soviet Union by relying exclusively on the superficial reports of "quickie" foreign tourists, including many foreign correspondents who have had but a fugitive glimpse of closed mosques and abandoned medressehs (Moslem seminaries). This writer knows from personal experience the laudable tenacity with which Moslem worshipers have clung to their faith

and Koran teachings. This is so true that the League of Militant Atheists operating from Moscow headquarters bitterly complained of the ineptitude of their methods in trying to dissuade these steadfast Oriental populations from worshiping Allah!

Today a Westerner traveling through Bukhara, Tashkent, Samarkand, Kazan and other such strongholds of Islamic tradition need not draw too hasty conclusions on viewing the countless closed *metcheti* (mosques) he is likely to encounter on his path. One does not have to travel three or four thousand miles easterly from Moscow to notice such sights of apparent neglect in the upkeep of religious edifices, or to look at outwardly deceiving signs of religious apostasy. The question that should be asked in viewing such a sad material state of affairs, whether applying to churches, monasteries, temples, mosques or synagogues, is: What secret force compelled these worshipers to allow their houses of prayer to assume such signs of neglect and abandonment? Many other questions of practical nature could be asked. The answers require more than a stereotyped explanation from indoctrinated Intourist guides or cursory conversations with frightened local inhabitants.

One more group of worshipers must be mentioned in this rapid classification before introducing another phase in the study of Russia's complicated religious situation. Worshipers of the Judaic faith were always a small minority in Russia although no other country ever contained as many Jews as did Russia before World War I.

The greater majority of Jews in Russia worship according to the strict Mosaic observances. They are what Americans call Orthodox Jews, as distinguished from Liberals or Reformed. At the close of World War I, the entire Jewish population of Russia exceeded five million. The question is often asked: How did they get into Russia? It was not the Jews in such large numbers that went to Russia, as Russia itself that went to them in the form of military conquest. Russian imperial armies conquered territories in which Jews had previously settled in very large numbers. It is too often forgotten that Napoleon not only fled from Moscow in flames during his ill-fated campaign of 1812, but was ultimately chased all the way back to France with the ensuing occupation of Paris (1814) by Russian and Allied troops. Catherine's able General Kutuzov, assisted by military coalitions, engaged Napoleon's retreating Grand Army, defeating it and bringing about an era of peace in Europe by the signing in 1815 of the Treaty of Vienna. As a result, the lands bordering on the Vistula, where important Jewish populations lived, were added to Russia. Throughout czarist times Jews were excluded from civil functions. A notable exception in this discrimination was that of Lazar M. Kaganovich who, even under the Czars, succeeded in becoming a recognized engineer. Up until Khrushchev's Kremlin shuffle in June of 1957, when high-ranking Politburo veterans were mercilessly ousted in a reverse demonstration of "monolithic solidarity," Kaganovich remained a top-flight Soviet leader. Much of his political

solidity was attributed to the fact that his sister was Stalin's common-law wife after the mysterious death of Alleluyeva, Stalin's first official wife, whose remains lie buried in the consecrated ground of the *Novodievitchi Monastir* in Moscow.

Thus one has a fairly good picture of who worshiped in Russia and what faiths were represented in that vast land before the October Revolution. All told, this comprises today a population exceeding two hundred million souls divided into ethnical groups speaking 157 languages and dialects. No particular mention is made here of the innumerable religious sects and other denominations that always existed in the Russian Empire. In recent times these sects have increased in number simply because entire regions have been deprived of competent religious guidance. In great part this is due to a constantly persecuted and depleting clergy affecting all faiths.

Before examining what has happened to this immense group of worshipers, it is necessary to look into the political circumstances of the year 1918. It will be seen how the initial years of the October Revolution affected the standing of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was so closely linked with the czarist power that collapsed at that period of history.

The Soviet Revolution and False Hopes of Religious Freedom

It was impossible for the Russian Orthodox Church, so closely linked to the czarist throne, not to feel the

repercussion of the Emperor's downfall. At the very beginning of the upheaval, the leaders of Russian Orthodoxy were unfortunately identified with movements inside Russia favoring a restoration of imperial autocracy. Outside Russia this was particularly the case with an important group of Russian Orthodox hierarchs who had escaped to Yugoslavia. From the city of Karlovci in that country, this faction directed a movement calling for the restoration of the monarchy. In the ensuing years, the Tykhonian adherents of the Moscow Patriarchate were several times asked by the Bolsheviks to condemn this movement. The emigrated group was, however, beyond the control of Patriarch Tykhon and his successors.

In June of 1917 the Provisional Government of Russia suppressed the office of Procurator General theretofore supervising all faiths in Russia. Since Peter the Great, this had been an imperial appointment. In 1917, Kerensky's Provisional Government also proclaimed freedom of conscience. This was a first step toward putting an end to discriminatory privileges favoring the Russian Orthodox Church. Parish schools were taken over by the Ministry for Public Education. The Russian Church felt it was losing ground in the face of these reforms. At a preliminary Church Council in Moscow attended by twelve hundred of the clergy and laity on July 13, 1917, the Orthodox Church presented a series of claims which would have placed it in a still more privileged situation than it enjoyed under the Czars. Because of the rejection of these claims by the Provisional Government, the latter

was labeled "anti-Christian" by Russian Orthodox leaders, whose far-reaching influence was already being curtailed.

In this atmosphere of friction the Russian Church later convoked its famous Council on August 15, 1917, attended by 564 delegates, including 278 laymen. Lively discussions ensued when the question of restoring the Patriarchate was brought up. It was feared by some that the very idea of a Patriarch would be too reminiscent of imperial autocracy. With unforeseen precipitation these deliberations were brought to a sudden end because of the Bolshevik uprising of October 25, and the eventual overthrow of Kerensky. With shootings going on in the streets of Moscow, an incomplete quorum of this Church Council elected Metropolitan Tykhon Patriarch of Moscow. The office had remained unfilled for 196 years.

From the very start of the civil war, the sympathies of the Russian Church leaned toward the White Army. Probably the motivation was the fact that the Bolsheviks had nationalized all the lands formerly owned by the churches and monasteries. Budding Soviet power was also taking over schools, seminaries and theological academies. These last were ultimately to be put completely out of business. Decrees and acts overtly inimical to the Church and to religion at large caused Tykhon to describe the Bolsheviks as "monsters of the human race." The old Patriarch was not the only one of his opinion, as is evidenced by the impartial, published (and later suppressed) testimony of the Netherlands Minister of the time, officially protecting British subjects and interests in

Petrograd. Part of this document published in full in April of 1919 by the British Government reads: "The danger is now so great that I feel it my duty to call the attention of the British and all other Governments to the fact that, if no end is put to Bolshevism in Russia at once, the civilization of the whole world will be threatened."

Even admitting that Russian Orthodoxy was closely associated with czarism, this does not excuse the inhuman repressive measure officially brought into play against the Russian Orthodox clergy, the worshipers of this Church, as well as against all other faiths. Mass demonstrations of religious character protesting the enactments of the Bolsheviks were held all over Russia and on the Red Square of Moscow. The population's response was instantaneous. In strict justice to the general religious cause at stake in this frightful cataclysm, it must be emphasized that the Bolshevik regime in power actively translated its avowed atheism into practice. By no stretch of imagination can it be said that the Soviet power remained neutral even after decreeing separation of Church from State.

Bolshevik Atheism Asserts Itself

Lenin could not immediately react to this mass dissatisfaction of worshipers. He was forced to wait until his redoubtable *Cheka* (Secret Police) was firmly established. Moreover, civil war prevented him from applying the full rigor of his repression, because of the fact that

the Orthodox Church, though sorely affected by the revolution, was still administratively powerful throughout the land.

On January 23, 1918, the Bolsheviks issued their first Decree on religious legislation. It was aimed principally at the Russian Orthodox Church, but also calculated to cripple all other faiths, including those that had never depended on the Czar. The Thirteen Articles of this Decree actually placed religion in a strait jacket while outwardly giving the impression of leniency. No parish or congregation, for example, from that time on, enjoyed juridical personality. All faiths were deprived of the right of property. Bible classes and Sunday schools were forbidden by law. The teaching of religion in private or public schools became a criminal offense.

Strangely and ironically enough, Article 13 of the first Soviet Constitution (1918) on paper authorized *religious* as well as antireligious propaganda. The All-Union Constitution of 1924 upheld this liberty in theory only, since it was never applied. In 1936, when the present so-called Stalinist Constitution was "voted," Article 124, worded almost identically to that of the two previous Constitutions, guaranteed freedom of conscience and in the same breath, freedom of antireligious propaganda. To the application of this destructive aspect of religious freedom (godless agitation) the Soviet regime applied itself with all the weight and power of state apparatus.

On April 8, 1929, an elaborate codification of laws on religion was decreed in Sixty-five Articles issued by the

Commissariat of Justice. This barely allows for the holding of services and the performance of religious ceremonies within an intricate system of ordinances sanctioning the 1918 Decree and rendering the practice of religion immeasurably difficult. Aside from all this, the teaching of religion to anyone under eighteen years of age became a criminal offense, punishable, in accordance with Article 122 of the Penal Code, by corrective labor up to one year.

To this day comments are still heard or read in print in which one is told that in the Soviet Union religion remains a private affair. Nothing could be more remote from the truth, regardless of all the misleading official texts invoked in support of this naïve affirmation. Much of the Communist attitude with regard to religion is contained in this quotation: "Religion is the opiate of the people." "This dictum of Marx," wrote Lenin, "is the cornerstone of the entire Marxist world-outlook concerning the problem of religion. All contemporary religions, churches and all types of religious organizations, Marxism forever looks upon as organs of bourgeois reaction serving to defend the exploitation and stultifying of the working class." (*Kalendar antireliguioznika na 1941 god.* Gosizdat: Moskva, 1941.) From Lenin, through Stalin and Malenkov, right down to Khrushchev, this open declaration of hostility toward all religions has never been repudiated.

In theory, the function of patriarch was attached to the person of Tykhon from the time of his hasty election in 1918 until his death in 1925. For the greater part of these eight years, however, Patriarch Tykhon was a

prisoner of the *Cheka* — the GPU. He was consequently prevented from freely exercising the leadership sorely needed in those troublesome times by the Russian Orthodox Church. Regardless of Communist declared hostility to religion, history books in the USSR falsely claim that true religious freedom came to Russia only with the advent of Bolshevism! An irrefutable argument in denial of this lying boast is the fact that the Patriarchate was restored under the Provisional Government, as the record shows. The Communists could do nothing about this at the time, since they were not in power. The simple fact is that they were confronted with a *fait accompli.* Furthermore, at the death of Tykhon, Stalin and the Politburo actually prevented the election of another succeeding Patriarch for the next eighteen years. It was only because of the German invasion of Russia by the *Wehrmacht,* reopening churches closed by the Communists, that the Kremlin startled its own people and the outside world by its *volte-face.* Sudden, expedient Communist concern for religion began to manifest itself only from the year 1941, when Stalin was forced to counteract Hitler's tactic of facilitating divine worship for a nation deprived of it for almost a quarter of a century by that time. This interesting phase will be developed in the course of this writing.

For the moment, we are examining the tremendous struggle which took place between the Cross and the Kremlin at the inception of Bolshevist power. Now for

more than forty years this battle against God, with varying degrees of intensity and modified methods, has never really ceased.

Schism within Orthodoxy Encouraged by the Kremlin

In the year 1923, a faction within the Orthodox Church, apparently moved more by political than by spiritual motives, launched a "progressive" movement, which was presented as more in keeping with modern times. The "progressive" character of this movement has been serving as a prototype for the so-called "autonomous" (Kremlin-dominated) tendencies now observed inside and outside Russia. Back in 1923, this group, headed by Reverend Alexander Vvedensky (known to the writer), attempted to win the good graces of the Bolsheviks. Initiating "reforms" completely out of keeping with Byzantine traditions, this new tendency called itself the *Obnovlentcheskaya Tserkov* (Reformed or Living Church). As long as it could harm the traditional Orthodox Church headed by Patriarch Tykhon, it secretly received much support from the ruling Communists. In later years its adherents reached the important figure of eleven million. Its churches consisted of edifices confiscated from the Tykhonian Church. Not a single *new* church, mosque, synagogue or house open to divine worship has been built in the entire USSR since 1918! This statement is emphatically made in direct contradiction to reports emanating from foreign visitors, including clergymen, who without scrutiny have parroted Intourist guided-excursion lectures.

One day, a delegation of these "progressive" innovators called on ailing Patriarch Tykhon, requesting permission, so they said, to put the chancery papers in order. It was nothing but a fraud to seize ecclesiastical power, later to accuse and defrock the Patriarch and have him stand trial for counterrevolution. The tactic suited the ends of the Communists, who were trying to create a split in the Russian Church. Popular indignation on the part of the overwhelming majority of Orthodox worshipers, and mass desertions from the "Living Church," with mounting suspicion against this "progressive" clergy, obliged the Soviets to abandon the project of staging the trial prepared by the *Cheka* — the GPU. Patriarch Tykhon while under arrest signed a statement more or less satisfactory to the Government and publicly reconciled the Russian Orthodox Church with the State. But this did not mark the end of the Russian Orthodox Church's troubles with the new atheistic regime. The Soviets had not at all given up the idea of destroying religion, annihilating the clergy, closing the churches and monasteries and persecuting the millions of Russians who persisted in their religious beliefs.

In the general wave of blasphemy, organized physical and moral intimidation, maltreatment and persecution that developed as Soviet atheistic power took root and asserted itself, every single major faith of Russia was aimed at. Quite naturally, the Russian Orthodox Church, because of its numerical predominance, was the one that

suffered most. The suppression of the Patriarchate, enforced by Bolshevist opposition to the election of a successor to Patriarch Tykhon, did much to disorganize Russian Orthodoxy. The subversive intrigues of the "Living Church," activated in a thousand different ways by the covert and overt collaboration of the atheistic State, aided in this disruption.

Two other influences participated powerfully during the following years in the quasi-complete disruption of organized divine cult throughout the entire country. The Secret Police and the State-sponsored League of Militant Atheists played intensive roles in furthering the avowed godless trends of Bolshevism. Officially, ecclesiastical affairs were entrusted to the *Narkomjus* (Commissariat for Justice). But it became plainly clear, as the *Cheka* — GPU — expanded that the violent suppression of organized religion in all Russia was being carried out by the Secret Police. As late as 1944, the author of this article was shown a carbon copy of an NKVD (Secret Police) search receipt, proving in black and white that the State was still struggling to stamp out the very idea of God. In this instance the NKVD had looked for and found counterrevolutionary evidence. The confiscated material was a Bible.

The Czars had their Procurator General, whose job it was to control the Russian Church and confine the activities of non-Orthodox faiths. But the Procurator, with all the controls he exercised, had never done anything to positively stamp out religion. Now, with the

advent of the Soviets, a notorious E. A. Tuchkov turned up as head of the Third Department of the Office of Secret Operation of the Secret Police. People called him the "new Chief Procurator of the Russian Church." Tuchkov had an agent in the GPU offices established in every city, town and village of the Soviet Union. The "legalizing" of churches, temples, synagogues and mosques required by the Decree of 1918 and the more elaborate law of 1929 was granted or denied at the whim and fancy of these agents. Their weeding-out process of eliminating all possible opposers to the "progressive" movement quickly showed itself. By the end of 1923, sixty-five Orthodox bishops had been exiled from their sees. According to Soviet figures, by the year 1925, 1088 churches had been sequestered while 972 had already been desecrated, turned to other uses or simply wrecked.

In those early years of the revolution, mass demonstrations of protest could still be organized against the onrushing waves of State-sponsored atheism, as well as against the persistent efforts of the so-called "Living Church" to disrupt the old traditional Orthodox Church. It was only by progressive degrees that the infamous Felix Dzerzhinsky, first supreme head of the *Cheka* — GPU — tightened the Gordian knot of repression on the whole nation. Shooting, exile, forced labor, concentration camps and imprisonment without the benefit of trial are but a few of the means resorted to, to keep that knot as tight as a clenched fist. From Dzerzhinsky through Yezhov, Yagoda, Beria, Kruglov (all GPU Chiefs) down to Dudurov

in 1956, and now under Ivan A. Serov, the pattern has been the same. For those who are not too familiar with the year-to-year evolution of the Kremlin Secret Police, here follow the various names and initials under which it was and still is known, dating from Lenin down to Khrushchev: *Cheka*- OGPU; GPU; NKVD; NKGB; and finally the MVD. This last one stands for *Ministerstvo Vnutrennix Diel* — Ministry of Internal Affairs. The actual MVD combines the two former Ministries for Internal Affairs and State Security. The MVD is presently under the direction of I. A. Serov, an expert in the superintending of concentration-camp labor. Oftentimes the question is heard: If conditions are so bad in the USSR, how is it the system keeps on going? The answer, restricting ourselves exclusively to economic considerations, is that practically all forced corrective labor—comprising upwards of twenty million adults, multiplied by two arms — is unretributed! The Soviet Union is thus able to export timber, cotton, mineral ores, oil, fish, caviar, furs, tobacco, etc., at a handsome capitalistic profit, obviously underselling Western nations. It does this while shouting, for outside consumption, that exploitation of man by man in the USSR is abolished! The fact is that in the USSR exploitation of man is an exclusive monopoly of the State.

The leather-jacketed "Chekists," brandishing revolvers and shooting at will, all belonged to the infamous *Tche-K* — two Russian letters signifying Extraordinary Commission. They personified the law, made it to suit

their purpose, recognized neither God nor devil and acted accordingly.

The League of Militant Atheists

In 1925, the Communists founded the notorious League of Militant Atheists, whose purpose was to "discourage" religion. They attempted to do this by the use of ridicule and a pseudo-scientific approach, trying to show that all phenomena of human life could be explained by natural causes. All media of mass communication were brought into play. The radio, the screen, the theatre and the press were seized upon to become the vehicles of antireligious propaganda sanctioned by the Constitution. On the other hand, all public statements in favor of religious belief were looked upon as anticonstitutional or even counterrevolutionary. Lectures on godlessness were organized throughout the land. The author personally attended a great number of these in the capital. All officers of the League of Militant Atheists were paid by the State. While it was a punishable crime to teach religion to anyone under eighteen years of age, the Militant Atheists could and did openly indoctrinate millions of innocent little Russians in the ways of atheism, godlessness and free thinking.

In a news dispatch datelined Moscow, March 14, 1956, the *New York Times*, in its late City Edition of March 15, 1956, published an item authored by Mr. Welles Hangen in which one reads a main head thus worded: Soviet Allowing "Sunday Schools." The subhead of this piece

reads: "Visiting US Protestants Told Priests May Now Instruct Children in Russia." This has all the earmarks of an old trick whereby convenient "news" is cleverly propagated by the Soviets while using the dateline of a foreign news agency. What demands scrutiny here is certainly not the sincerity of the US Protestant deputation, depending entirely, it seems, on the services of interpreters. What needs to be clarified is the statements "told" to the deputation and faithfully reported by it. To quote from the *New York Times* of said date:

> "A United States Protestant deputation reported today that the Soviet Government was for the first time permitting a form of organized religious education in churches.
>
> "Regular Sunday afternoon meetings are held in Orthodox Churches, the Americans said, under the guidance of a parish priest. Both adults and children attend these sessions, at which the Orthodox liturgy, creed and prayers are taught.
>
> "Until now the Soviet authorities have not permitted group religious instruction of youngsters under eighteen years of age except at public sermons. Permission for the Sunday afternoon meetings marks a new step in the liberalization of the Soviet attitude toward religion begun during World War II."

It is not clear, from the reading of the article, *whose* statements are being reported in the third paragraph of the above quotation. The entire reporting leaves this writer very much in doubt as to the honesty and veracity

of the statements *"told"* to the deputation. No churches are named, no dates are given, no official statement abrogating existing laws is quoted. No concrete example of the alleged "liberalization of the Soviet attitude toward religion" is pinpointed or identified as having been actually seen in operation in this or that particular church. Is it just something that has been *"told"* this deputation, like so many statements made years back to H. G. Wells, Romain Rolland, Dr. Cyril Garbet, or the Dean of Canterbury? These are but a few of the illustrious visitors whose credulity while in the Soviet Union was so severely taxed. The tenure of press reports so far available on the findings of these returned clergymen, as well as the prepared statement read by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake on the day of the deputation's arrival back in this country, indicates that all that was *"told"* them was not to be taken at face value. A much more objective report on the lack of freedom to hold Sunday schools in the USSR is contained in this quotation from Representative Brooks Hays, Congressman, and President of the Southern Baptist Convention, who visited Russia in the spring of 1958. "The reason I say that the Russians do not have freedom of religion," said Representative Hays," is that they are not free to propagate the faith. The churches cannot operate Sunday schools or conduct any kind of educational programs. They are not permitted to acquire property to open new churches." What must be added to this correct observation is the fact that Article 122 of the USSR

Penal Code makes it a criminal offense for anyone to teach religion in a group to a child or to a minor.

Atheism in the Schools

To make sure that all the youth of the Soviet Union would benefit from these doctrines of "proletarian enlightenment," the *Narkompros* (People's Commissariat for Education) was officially enrolled in this nation-wide campaign against God and religious observances. Manuals formally teaching atheism were prepared under the immediate control of the Militant Atheists and sent all over the Republics of the Union in the required languages. Libraries, reading rooms, centers of learning and even the Parks of Rest and Culture had departments dedicated to antireligious propaganda. All these practices demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt how "neutral" the Communist State remained in the fight against God. No stone was left unturned in the diabolical efforts exerted by the Soviets to eradicate even the concept of God, the notion of an immortal soul, and the deep religious convictions of a noble nation steeped in Christianity and belief in the supernatural. The time has now come to examine at close hand how Russian worshipers have stood up in the face of this organized onslaught.

Concealed Fiasco of Atheism in Soviet Russia

No amount of imagination can adequately picture the determination of Kremlin leaders to do away with religious belief in what was and still is, in the opinion of

this writer, Holy Russia. Surprising as this statement may seem at first sight, it should be borne in mind that the State-monopolized news communiqués from TASS, as well as every other foreign-agency dispatch cabled out of the USSR, are strictly censored. The importance of this tyrannical Soviet control of news came out in the open when US officials requested free access to news, while negotiating the dubious "cultural exchange" agreement signed on January 27, 1958. The Kremlin answered by a flat "No," denying to US agencies in Moscow the right of cabling or reporting uncensored news. By such means has the public inside and outside Russia been led to believe that religion is either dying or on its way out. On the contrary, there is infinitely more religious vitality in the USSR than atheistic Communist leaders are willing to admit or allow to be known.

A little-known plan of extreme importance was devised by Soviet leaders not only to "discourage" divine worship, but to render it practically impossible for Russia's three major faiths: Christian, Moslem and Judaic. Throughout the Christian world the day of worship par excellence is Sunday. In Russian this is designated by the beautiful word *Voskresenie,* meaning the day of resurrection. There are millions and millions of Christians in the USSR. Indeed, there are more now than ever before, since entire countries and territories of Christian faith have been "annexed." In the Islamic faith the day consecrated to Allah is Friday, faithfully observed wherever the Koranic teachings are practiced without hindrance.

The USSR is populated in the Far-Eastern Republics and Central Asia by some thirty-five to forty million souls of Mohammedan tradition. No reliable figures have ever been published as to the number of Jews in the Soviet Union. It would appear that the Soviets wish to keep these statistics enveloped in mystery. There are certainly more than two million, a figure quoted by the American Jewish Committee in March of 1956. A conservative estimate based on what Russian people say brings their number to about six million.

Not all the Jews of Russia live in the Biro-Bidjan colony established for them without too much success on the southern Pacific Coast of Asiatic Russia. Principally, Jews populate European Russia along the old and new western borders.

Orthodox Jews worship Jehovah on Saturdays, the original Sabbath, the seventh day of the week in the Hebrew calendar. When this writer entered Russia in 1934 by virtue of the Roosevelt-Litvinov Religious Agreement, there were no Sundays, Fridays or Saturdays by name. Nor were there any other names of weekdays used for any practical purpose. The days were simply numbered from one to thirty. Overlapping days were automatically added to the five legal working days. Every sixth day was called a *Ouixhodnoy din,* literally meaning a day for going out, or a day of rest. Thus on the sixth, twelfth, eighteenth, twenty-fourth, and thirtieth day of any month, shops, plants, factories and government of-

fices were closed. Whenever any of these rest days coincided with a Sunday, Friday or Saturday, worshipers went to their churches, mosques and synagogues, if they felt they could do so without molestation. This by no means was not always the case, as this writer was able to observe over a long period of years.

The system was practiced from 1929 to 1940, following a Politburo ordinance establishing the *Piatidnievka* (five-day week) for the purpose of intensifying production. Everyone remembers this period of intense industrialization, when the moribund Soviet economy was revitalized by the momentary reintroduction of moderate capitalism into Russia, which Lenin called the New Economic Policy. By one stroke of the pen, Russians were actually ordered away from divine services in their churches, mosques and synagogues. Let no one belittle the importance of this single step whereby Christians, Moslems and Jews alike were physically prevented from practicing their religion. On the average once only during six weeks, the Sunday, Friday or Saturday coincided with an official worshiping day that fitted into the religious observances of these three major faiths. Labor discipline being what it is in the Soviet Union, workers, technicians, bookkeepers, teachers etc., could not possibly stay away from work for the purpose of attending divine services.

In the early stages of the five-year plans (1927) the urban population of the USSR was estimated at seventeen per cent of 147,000,000 people. The remaining eighty-

three per cent were peasants imbued with the purest and most tenacious Christian traditions. Peasants not only took advantage of the official rest day, but on the whole flatly refused to work the farms on the Lord's Day. This was the case also for a series of other religious holydays such as the *Petrov din* (Feast of St. Peter), *Maslenitsa* (Shrovetide), *Rozhdiestvo* (Christmas), and many other such solemnities. On these days no amount of persuasion could force a muzhik to do a stitch of work. Where churches were still open with an officiating clergyman, the peasants went to attend the liturgies. Wherever churches were closed, sealed by the State or otherwise secularized by a rigid application of the 1918-1929 laws, the people stayed at home and worshiped privately. There is nothing more edifying than to see these God-loving Russian peasants enter the churches that are left open, coming in from the fields and joining in the beautiful Slavonic prayers that praise the glories of God.

Obstinate persistence on the part of these deeply mystic souls in carrying out their traditional worship baffled the Kremlin godless agitators sent out in droves on State-paid salaries to preach atheism. With the Sundays tabulated by the people on homemade calendars, added to the official rest days and other occurring religious festivities, the agricultural plans devised by Kremlin savants were all knocked into cocked hats. This was the passive and silent but effective resistance of Russian peasantry retaliating in the only way it could against State

encroachments on the private religious life of the individual. It proved so effective that the limping five-day week calendar was done away with in 1940. The Sunday just had to be restored as the official Lord's Day and a day of rest. Children who were ten years of age in 1940 had no notion whatsoever of the traditional names given to the days of the week and had to be taught them at school. In those years, only newspaper datelines printed the weekday names. Otherwise everything was referred to as *tcheslo* (number-date) such and such of the month. Easter, Christmas, Pentecost and other great solemnities became ordinary working days. Woe to those in urban districts where labor discipline was more easily controlled, who did not turn up on the job. When the Politburo restored the seven-day week, a *Pravda* editorial told its readers that if the Sunday was coming back to life it did not necessarily mean that Soviet citizens *had* to go to church.

Phases of Soviet Religious Repression

The noiseless battle related above took place without the Kremlin ever admitting a struggle of course. It was not the only important victory won by a muted people whose voice is heard only in extraordinary circumstances. Reference is here made to the infrequent censuses in which the State runs no risk of endangering its security by asking a few statistical questions. But before developing this encouraging chapter of religious history in Russia, it is necessary to call the reader's attention to the intensified

momentum gathered by the State-sponsored anti-God campaign waged at full blast during those years.

There was not a single important city in Russia of 1934 that did not have at least one antireligious museum. Invariably it was set up in a church, mosque or synagogue forcibly seized and thus profaned. All Soviet reports about churches and other places of worship having been closed by "popular consent" are downright nonsense. Some of these secularized churches, as witnessed by the author, were architectural monuments of celebrated fame, such as the *Isaacovsky Sobor* of Leningrad, the *Troitskaya Lavra* of Zagorsk, and the *Strastnoy Monastir* of Moscow, to name but a few. Regardless of the blasphemous ridicule heaped on these grotesque exhibits put on display and meant to turn worshipers away from God, the results obtained were always contrary to the purpose intended. Even the *Antireliguioznik,* a pseudo-intellectual review published in Moscow to propound atheism, bitterly complained about the ineffectiveness of these displays. When groups of peasants were conducted to these museums, immediately upon viewing the holy icons they would cross themselves with the traditional prostrations customary in the Eastern rite and break out in prayer.

In order to impress upon the semiliterate the futility of prayer, worship and religious observances, a monthly magazine called *Bezbozhnik* — The Godless — was for many years put out by the State Antireligious Publishers (GAIZ). It was profusely illustrated with offensive cartoons and caricatures about God, Jehovah, Allah, the

Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mother of God, St. Nicholas other religious themes were bandied about with repulsive captions. All libraries were obliged to subscribe to these publications. In nurseries operated by the State, Russian alphabet cards were prepared in colors with anti-God drawings. Even before learning to read, children were taught engaging little tunes and godless poems which could be used in group singing and recitation. Immense quantities of books, pamphlets, brochures and calendars were printed in various languages by the Militant Atheists to be distributed throughout the Republics. A considerable supply of these was prepared in Moscow to be used in the "annexed" Baltic Republics following upon the military occupation of those "liberated" countries.

One of Lenin's speeches delivered back in 1920 has been printed over and over again in millions of copies denying the existence of God and the authenticity of the Ten Commandments. Children were marched in ranks to art museums, to be lectured to in distorted explanations of tableaux depicting religious scenes. In this one respect alone, the Militant Atheists prepared an explanatory booklet conceived along lines of antireligious propaganda for the Tretiakov Art Gallery of Moscow. Essay contests were held in schools to see who would write the best antireligious story. One particular booklet containing blasphemous poems and authored by the notorious hack writer Demian Biedny was given wide circulation. For many years, in lieu of christening, young Russian mothers were encouraged to symbolically offer their newborn babes to

the State in a red-draped room where stood a bust of Lenin. This attempt among so many others proved a dismal failure.

In the meantime, churches, mosques and synagogues were being closed by the thousands. Throughout the country priests, pastors, rabbis and mullahs were disappearing. Aging clergymen who managed to escape arrest were not replaced, since all training centers of every single faith were forced out of existence. Every single monastery in the country was disbanded, most of them being used as antireligious museums. It soon became impossible in any part of Russia to purchase a Bible, prayer book, cross, icon, liturgical vestment, sacred vessel, etc. The firewood fuel in one public establishment for an entire winter consisted of an immense accumulation of icons confiscated from forcibly closed places of worship. Church music was discouraged by the systematic intimidation of choir members. Concerts of sacred music were a thing of the past. All other forms of religious art, including architecture, painting, mosaics, the printing of ecclesiastical ceremonial books, met with the same fate. The synodal printing press of Moscow, renowned for its beautiful Slavonic editions, was transformed into an antireligious propaganda center for the publication of godless literature. The teaching of the Slavonic language used in the Byzantine rite was gradually suppressed in all schools. Stores and fruit stands were using as wrapping paper, pages torn out of precious volumes from nationalized monasteries and theological academies. All outward signs

reminiscent of Russia's religious past were obliterated. Churches of historical fame were dynamited or otherwise demolished, with no new ones being built. The calendar aligned by the Bolsheviks with that of the West was completely secularized. The only holidays were the anniversary of Lenin's death, November 7, May 1, and Physical Culture Day.

The Kremlin Scared Out of Its Wits

By the year 1937 the Soviets were making ready for the celebration of twenty years of revolution. A secret antireligious plan was scheduled to terminate that year. Kremlin leaders, atheists to the last man, were feverishly waiting for that anniversary to proclaim the complete triumph of atheism. In their estimation everything indicated that the final *coup de grâce* was to be given to religion. Organized worship had by that time been disrupted in every one of the then-existing thirteen Republics. Unquestionably all outward manifestations of religious faith had reached a miserable, agonizing phase.

Intensified repressive measures against the clergy who remained, coupled with innumerable arrests of worshipers, led Kremlin potentates to believe that Holy Russia was no more. It was about to emit its last breath. So sure did they feel about this that it was decided to officially ask the entire population of Russia if it still believed in God. In conjunction with the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, a national census was elaborately planned with questionnaires carrying fourteen

items on the blanks: Name, age, nationality, sex, occupation, etc. The ninth question was thus worded "*Vierouioushtchi-li voui ili niet?* — Are you or are you not a believer?" The question was not: "Do you attend church?" Nor was it: "Do you practice religious observances?" It was an open, point-blank question seeking to know if the individual in question believed in God or not. In passing, let it be pointed out that it is difficult to reconcile this intrusion into private affairs with Article 3 of the 1918 Decree of separation of Church and State reading in part: "In all official acts any mention relating to the belonging or the non-belonging of citizens to a religion is suppressed."

Too much insistence cannot be placed on the fact that Kremlin chiefs were so sure of their shot that they made bold to ask the question. What a magnificent present they would be offering themselves in the form of a national apostasy! The Soviets never would have dared to risk the solemn and supreme prestige of their godless, materialistic philosophy, had they not been absolutely certain of the anticipated results. So in January of 1937, after months and months of preparation, public lectures, newspaper articles in *Pravda* and *Izvestia,* radio announcements and other methods of mass communication, they launched a veritable army of trained personnel in a house-to-house canvass of the whole nation. Special instructions provided for the questioning of travelers on trains, ships and planes. This writer personally answered the questions of the long census blanks.

When the returns were tabulated in the capital, particularly on the ninth question as to who did or did not believe in God, bewilderment soon gave way to consternation. From an absolutely incontrovertible source the author learned that seventy per cent of the population dared to put themselves down on the census blanks as believers. It is also known from the same source that vast numbers refused to answer that question for fear of reprisals. In many instances citizens betrayed their intimidation. It is therefore quite safe to say without fear of exaggeration that the startling figure of seventy per cent, actually computed by the Central Bureau of Statistics, does not give a complete picture of the total number of Russians who believe in God.

Upon becoming acquainted with these figures, the League of Militant Atheists suddenly became eloquently silent. The silence of these godless agitators was all the more noticeable because they had launched a formidable, drum-beating campaign, prematurely announcing success. Now they were buried under a mountain of ridicule. All other agencies that had been employed in building up the census remained suspiciously quiet. The population felt something had gone wrong but, as usually happens in such circumstances, they were not told the reason for this extraordinary silence.

In the meanwhile, the Politburo, scared out of its wits, went into a huddle trying to find a way to save face. It took them eight months to creep out of their confusion.

Finally they covered up their shame by taking refuge behind an official statement published in the form of a solemn decree. The census was pronounced null and void. Because of the tremendous hopes the Soviets had entertained for obtaining a mass repudiation of religion on a nationwide scale — hopes that had been trumpeted on every possible tone of the gamut in numberless editorials — the magnitude of Kremlin discomfiture was truly great. Even the majestic language of the decree declaring the 1937 census returns unacceptable could not conceal the immense frustration of the leaders. This decree is here reproduced in full, just as it appeared in the *Pionerskaya Pravda* eight months after the returns had been checked and rechecked to avoid all possibility of error. Here follows this illuminating document, couched in the usual Kremlinian phraseology.

> "In view of the fact that the All-Union census of the population of January 6, 1937, was carried out by the Central Administration of the National Economic Registry of the USSR Gosplan with gross violation of the elementary fundamentals of statistical science, and also in violation of government-approved instructions, the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the USSR has recognized the organization of the census to be unsatisfactory and the very results of the census to be defective.
>
> The Council of the Peoples' Commissars of the USSR has obliged the Central Administration of the National Economic Registry of the USSR Gosplan to carry out

anew an All-Union census of the population during the month of January in 1939."

Two years later, when time came to prepare the revised census, this writer was still in Russia. It was only then that a little additional light was shed on the reasons given for suppressing the returns of the first census. Mention was then made of the

"enemies of the people, the infamous Trotsky-Bukharin agents of fascism,"

who were made the handy scapegoats of this spectacular fiasco. When this second census took place, the question of knowing how many Russians still believed in God was noticeably dropped. The explanation of this revealing silence was tucked away in two lines of an *Izvestia* article which said: "For the purpose of simplifying the census program, the question regarding religion is being omitted."

At the time, this crushing defeat of atheism was not publicized by the local or foreign press, simply because the shattering fact of Russia's persevering faith in God was kept secret. To this writer's knowledge, the first public mention of the encouraging steadfastness of the Russian people in the face of organized anti-God campaigns took place in the city of Montreal, Canada, in 1942. On this occasion, Metropolitan Fedtchenkov of New York, representing the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow, delivered a fund-raising address to bolster contributions for the Soviet war effort. The Metropolitan urged his audience not to look upon Russia as an atheistic country,

for more than seventy per cent of its people, he said, professed belief in God.

Such is the brief story of how Stalin, the Kremlin and the State-supported League of Militant Atheists lost their battle with God. World War II years that were about to follow revealed the might of Russia's religious faith in a succession of events to be recorded in the course of this writing. However, for several more years this unhappy country remained the scene of redoubled attempts on the part of the Government to do away with all traces of religion.

What has so far been written serves as indispensable historical background for a clear understanding of what can be called the Kremlin's neo-religious policy. The Soviet attitude toward religion *has* changed in recent years, but only to the guarded extent the reader is now invited to appreciate in succeeding chapters.

Khrushchev's pet phrase of "peaceful co-existence" continues to be the main theme of the Kremlin political orchestration taking in religion. But every now and then the true, ugly-looking face of godlessness comes out into the open, as Moscow radio recently demonstrated. This time it was a frontal attack on the masses of Moslems inhabiting Central Asia. Lucian I. Klimovich, a veteran propagator of atheism, whose "works" figure among the gems of Soviet literature in this writer's possession, denounced the millions of Mahomet's followers in a Moscow broadcast of May 22, 1958. Indirectly paying tribute to the tenacity of these God-fearing Moslems, Klimovich

called them "a remnant of the past, which the Soviet people have left far behind." It was noted that this broadcast was timed so as not to create a bad impression on Egyptian leader Gemal Abdel Nasser, said to be a fervent Moslem worshiper, and at that time visiting the Soviet Union. Klimovich waited until Nasser had crossed the border on his way back before denouncing the religious practices of Moslems living in Soviet Russia. Knowledge of these jointly related facts is useful in studying the "changes" now observed in the new manner with which Kremlin leaders, all atheistic to the last man, are now facing contemporary religious problems. Soviet Russia is a country only *officially* pronounced atheistic. The carefully withheld results of the census gave the Kremlin's colossal propaganda machine the biggest shock it ever sustained.

Preliminaries to the Kremlin's Neo-Religious Policy

A brief study of Russia's religious situation over the last forty years necessarily leaves many things unsaid. The dominant theme of this historical excursion behind the impenetrable curtain of censorship is the blatant hostility of the Soviet regime toward anything religious. All statements to the contrary notwithstanding, even those made by Khrushchev to lead astray public opinion abroad and place it off guard in matters of religion show the absolute incompatibility existing between Marxism and faith in the divine. The unfolding of events thus far narrated makes the above statement quite clear. This

must be insisted upon and repeated over and over again, that the Western world may not be caught off base when clever injections of anesthesia are pumped into the life-stream of world opinion.

The Soviet-inspired Stockholm Peace Congress of a few years back, the so-called Kremlin "new look," the enticing disarmament pronouncements of Bulganin prior to his getting the "bounce" from the "B and K" duumvirate, the synthetic "Geneva spirit," and so many other moves of Soviet diplomacy all bear the unmistakable trademark of calculated deceit. Time and again, in countless negotiations the Soviets have demonstrated that deception is their principal stock-in-trade.

It has been calculated that out of fifty-two agreements signed between the USSR and the US alone, fifty have been shamelessly violated by the Kremlin, beginning with the very first treaty solemnly signed by M. M. Litvinov at the time of recognition of the USSR. The Religious Protocol forming part of that US — USSR agreement was violated from the very start, this writer having been personally victimized for twelve years, from the day he set foot on Soviet territory. Since March of 1955, all efforts at having an American Catholic priest sent to the Soviet Union for the purpose of ministering to the spiritual needs of Americans as provided for in the Protocol, have been systematically thwarted. This Soviet practice is in complete disregard of the stipulated guarantees formally given by the Kremlin plenipoten-

tiary. It was Pius XI who authoritatively said that Communism is intrinsically perverted and that collaboration with it should be excluded for any who would save Christian civilization.

Sociologists speaking and writing about Communism are prone to forget that it is not merely an economic doctrine. Communism is invariably linked with a vast antireligious program intended not only for Russia but for the entire world. There is sufficient evidence for the positively hostile attitude of the Soviets toward religion to remove even the shadow of doubt in this respect.

When the new Constitution was "voted" in 1936, many commentators outside Russia gave to Article 124 a generous interpretation never intended by the Soviet legislators. Article 124 reads:

> "In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the Church in the USSR is separated from the State, and the school from the Church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of antireligious propaganda is recognized for all citizens."

The sad reality here is that the 1936 Constitution, modifying that of 1918 guaranteeing freedom of *religious* propaganda, completely suppressed such freedom. Absolute freedom of antireligious propaganda was made an article of law, boldly incorporating the anti-God philosophy of Marxism in the Constitution.

There seems to be very little doubt that the insertion of Article 124 in the Constitution was part of the five-

year antireligious plan. The public "discussion" of the proposed amendment to this Article, in which Stalin is supposed to have taken the stand that religious functions should *not* be banned by law, was another impudent sham intended for the admiration of the world gallery. So many people *outside* Russia thought at the time that Stalin was actually defending religion! This is precisely the false impression his clever maneuver was calculated to give. Once again, Kremlin prestige was capitalizing on a false interpretation of Soviet law for foreigners; this, TASS of course did nothing to correct.

The 1937 census, as has been seen, had been expected to prove that the Russian people no longer believed in God. The Communists would have been only too happy to show that, one year after "voting" the 1936 Constitution, nobody cared for the "freedom of religious worship" guaranteed by that law. How cleverly all this had been prepared! But the reader now knows what a pitiable failure resulted from the Kremlin's wily moves in trying to have the nation statistically declared atheistic. In their diabolical determination, the Soviets, unable to dissociate atheism from their way of life, decided to intensify their fight against God.

Sergei N. Krylenko, Attorney General of the USSR in 1937 (since liquidated), delivered a lecture officially commenting on the Constitution. From the very mouth of this top official, this writer heard these words: "If citizens wish to bury their dead with religious ceremonies, let them do so. If they wish to bury their potatoes with

religious ceremonies, let them also do so." Can anything more eloquently emphasize the inherent blasphemy and evil contained in the tenets of Communism? That one quotation should suffice to convince starry-eyed, and at times sincere, admirers of Soviet leaders, who keep on saying that after all Communism cannot be as bad as it is depicted. One would think that quotes of this caliber would be of importance to journalists. To the writer's knowledge, it was never reported in any Moscow newspaper or foreign dispatch. But the day Khrushchev called for an end to the ridiculing of religion in November of 1954, immediately his words were universally misinterpreted to mean that he was protecting worshipers! In reality, Boss Khrushchev was clamoring for a more "scientific" intensification of anti-God agitation. This resembles Stalin's Constitution "discussion" trick, in which he palmed himself off as a friend of worshipers! Here again, TASS did nothing to correct preposterous assumptions that were due to a regrettable ignorance of the Russian language on the part of some newsmen.

As long as Stalin lived, his declared hostility to religion was a secret to none. Back in 1927, while answering questions from an American Labor Delegation, the Kremlin potentate said: "The Party cannot remain neutral regarding the propagators of religious prejudices [meaning religion], with regard to reactionary clergy poisoning the minds of laboring masses. Have we annihilated the clergy? Yes, we have annihilated it. The trouble is that it is not yet completely liquidated." (J. V. Stalin, *Voprosi*

Leninizma [*Problems of Leninism*] 9th Russian prototype edition, Partinoi Izdateltsvo, Moskva, 1933)

This statement contains the key to the mystery (for some people) of the disappearance of Russia's once numerous clergy, including that of all the recognized faiths of that unhappy land. Orthodox and Catholic priests, Protestant ministers and pastors, Jewish rabbis and Moslem mullahs were rounded up, apprehended, arrested, exiled or condemned to forced labor at an intensified pace. Mass arrests of the clergy, starting under Lenin, continued under Stalin at a rapid pace, the latter feeling that this extermination was never going fast enough. At that rate it continued up to the time of German invasion of 1941, when Stalin had other worries to think of. Even after that, clergymen and ministers of the Gospel, including one French Assumptionist and one Italian Jesuit, were sentenced to Vorkuta in 1945. It is an irresponsible statement to say that the Russian clergy was merely depleted or decimated. To begin with, all Orthodox and Catholic seminaries of Russia were closed, including four Orthodox theological academies formerly operating in Moscow, St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Kiev and Kazan. At the death of Patriarch Tykhon, the entire Orthodox hierarchy was already decapitated and the whole administration of the Church was prevented from acting in its legitimate capacities. The parish clergy was severed from normal ties with this disappearing eparchial (diocesan) administration. Of the fifty-four thousand Russian Orthodox parishes existing back in 1917, barely a few

thousand were operating by 1940. Officiating parish priests who had managed to hold on were apprehensively waiting for their turn to be arrested.

The material side of this persecution defies any type of description. Suffice it to say that innumerable cathedrals, churches, chapels, wayside shrines, convents, monasteries and other such places of worship were turned over by the State to profane use. In Moscow alone, 541 places of worship have now been reduced to twenty-three of all faiths, for a population of seven million, the great majority of whom are believers.

There are no figures available as to the number of Protestant churches, congregations and parishes forced out of existence. By 1940 all the clergy of the Lutheran, Reformed and Evangelical churches, including the elders of the Baptists communities, had been disbanded. On the eve of World War II, Baptist communities in Moscow carried on their prayer meetings in out-of-the-way places outside the city, and never twice in the same locality.

As to Catholicism, the ten Apostolic Administrations established to supplant the three dioceses of Mohilev, Tiraspol and Kamenetz were all disrupted by 1939. Four of these Administrators Apostolic known to the author dropped completely out of sight. More than eight hundred Latin-rite Catholic priests perished between 1917 and 1939, and fifteen hundred churches and parishes of the Latin rite alone were closed. No statistics are obtainable concerning Catholics of the Byzantine or Armenian rites, whose clergy have all been imprisoned. The Lenin

Library in Moscow, which prides itself on the possession of millions of volumes, contains among other items the entire theological collection of the former Catholic Seminary of Pinsk. It has been completely catalogued, but remains under lock and key. In 1941 the only Roman Catholic parish with an officiating priest within the 1939 boundaries of the USSR, was the St.-Louis-des-Français Church of Moscow, whose pastor was the author of this booklet.

The Judaic faith fared no better throughout the Western borders. Sabbath and rabbinical schools were wantonly closed, as were all centers of Hebrew religious learning. As happened on wholesale scale for other faiths, a great number of synagogues were turned into stores, dormitories, clubs, moving-picture houses, etc.

The Moslems suffered considerably from personal persecution of their *imams, muezzins* and *ulemas* (theologians, prayer-caller and teachers, respectively). Islamic houses of study, where the Koran was formerly taught, were practically all closed. Worshiping Moslems with their mullahs became the butt of abuse on the part of atheists, who put out special manuals at State expense, ridiculing the Moslem faith.

All the remaining clergy without distinction were disfranchised and, by the mere fact, deprived of food and clothing rationing cards. Their children were excluded from all schools of advanced learning. Families of clergymen were deprived of the vital "living space." They were forced to lease corners in rooms of parishioners who

dared run the risk of giving shelter to these disinherited outcasts. Electric current rates were quintupled when they applied to churches. Unnecessary repairs were ordered by "technical commissions," while at the same time the release of maintenance materials was denied. This invariably resulted in the closing of the church, mosque or synagogue for "non-fulfillment" of the contract. Heating fuel was sold to churches only at exorbitant prices. Land and building taxes were levied out of all proportion, at the whim of Soviet administration. It was obligatory for churches to carry fire insurance; the State, however, was the one which received any eventual compensation, in case of damages settlement collecting the equivalent sum from the congregation. There was no redress possible because the 1918 Decree was still in force. In numberless villages, paid agitators were brought in to "vote" down the maintenance of churches, thus allowing the Militant Atheists to falsely brag about the "popular consent" every time this maneuver was engineered. In the single province of Kuibyshev, 2,200 churches, chapels and mosques existed before the revolution. Of these, 1,173 were already closed in 1937 by "popular consent." Because of this and for many other reasons, Holy Russia, studded with jewels of ancient architecture, became a forsaken, barren land with a profusion of demolished places of worship, decapitated domes and cupolas bereft of their crosses. The few, poorly kept churches, mosques and synagogues left open struggled against overwhelming odds to *keep* open. Public games, dances, civilian military drills,

group physical-culture exercises and all manner of other obligatory functions were planned to coincide with hours of worship and divine service, even after the seven-day week was restored. It was in this atmosphere of positive religious repression that the Soviet Union went to war on the fateful morning of June 22, 1941, when the *Wehrmacht* attacked at 4:30 A. M.

Hitler's "Crusade" in the Soviet Union

The German army invaded Russia, armed not only with its formidable military technique. Long before the diplomatic handshake between Stalin and Hitler, resulting in the Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty of Non-Aggression of August 23, 1939, the Reich Foreign Office was well aware of the tremendous oppression raging throughout Russia with regard to religion. Hitler resolved to capitalize on the sympathy his armies would derive from the religiously persecuted Russians. For this reason he proclaimed not only a campaign of military conquest but also one of liberation from communist atheistic oppression.

In preparation for the playing of this trump card, more political than religious in intent, Hitler had vast stocks of religious vestments of all description secretly prepared in Germany, along with quantities of sacred vessels and other liturgical implements. A considerable number of refugee Russians living in Germany prior to World War II had been trained and ordained in the purest Slavic traditions.

Following the *Wehrmacht's* drive toward the East, the dividends of this secret preparation began to appear. Everyone remembers the rapid thrust of Hitler's lightning war. What Westerners do *not* know too well, is the shattering moral success of Hitler's "crusade" during the first eighteen months of the four-year conflict.

In every conquered city, town and village, the first preoccupation of all the commanding German officers was to look for the churches, the majority of which were known beforehand to have been closed for a number of years. On the first Sunday following occupation, mass meetings of the Russian civilian population were assembled on the public squares with detachments of the German army standing at attention. In all these localities a solemn proclamation was read in the Russian language to the effect that henceforth all civilians who wished to worship could do so without molestation, under the protection of the Reich. Where the churches were closed, they were solemnly reopened by the Germans. Where there were no priests, one was summoned from the ranks of the German army. Where there were no vestments, sacred vessels, or other needed articles for the divine service, the German quartermaster officers supplied them on the spot from cases brought in from Germany. There was even the human element touch brought into these manifestations and electrifying the Russians to a high degree of enthusiasm. Wives of Russian priests were also the object of attention. Each one received a beautifully done up package of "feminine frivolities." These

parcels contained perfumes, silk stockings and other wearing apparel of special character. In their drab manner of living, most of these Russians had never even dreamed that such things existed.

This was not all. The cathedral of Smolensk, secularized by Soviet atheists for a long period of years, was refurnished under German supervision, less than a month after the invasion. A solemn Byzantine service with concelebration by many priests was held there, with the participation of a double choir. It was broadcast through the portable German army *Telefunken* transmitters, to the utter joy of the population. They had not heard or seen such liturgical splendor since the advent of the Soviet regime. By that same proclamation the civil rights of the clergy were restored. All church property confiscated by the Soviets was returned to rightful owners. Sermons could be heard again though they had to be submitted to the *Kommandatur*.

Beginning of the Kremlin's Neo-Religious Policy

A feeling of religious freedom expanded throughout occupied Russia with lightning speed. News of this unexpected religious emancipation quickly leaked through the lines, reaching Moscow at the point when it was being officially evacuated. Under German occupation — and this is no exaggeration — the Russians were deliriously jubilant at the mere thought of being able to worship without being punished.

In Moscow, the repercussion among Kremlin leaders in the face of this stupendous German success with worshipers, coupled with colossal military defeats of the Red Army, produced a stupefaction of magnitudinal proportions. To begin with, Kremlin reaction was purely negative. Stalin and other leaders did not beat their breasts in public pronouncements of contrition for the accumulated crimes committed against God and the millions who had suffered for His sake. There was nothing of the sort.

The first sign of subdued surrender was the silent suppression of the godless ragsheet *Bezbozhnik* newspaper, which ceased publication two weeks after the invasion. The magazine of the same name and other antireligious publications also stopped appearing on the newsstands. Indeed, they were not being printed at all. All antireligious museums were hastily closed. Suddenly there were no more anti-God lectures, plays, films or any other demonstrations of the kind. A tipped-off foreign correspondent asked the Commissar for Public Information why *Bezbozhnik* and other such papers and magazines were no longer being printed. The answer was that there was a great shortage of paper because of the war. Asked why all other papers were still being published, the Commissar, unable to conceal his embarrassment, gave no reply. This little episode could not be reported at the time because of censorship. Even after these years it has lost none of its poignant meaning.

If the persecuted Russian Orthodox Church did not respond in a body throughout Russia to the German "crusade," it is mainly because of the patriotic attitude of Metropolitan Sergei of Moscow, which was unquestionably encouraged by concessions granted to the Church at that zero hour. Indeed, Metropolitan Sergei had a far greater ascendancy over the people than the whole body of Kremlin leaders put together. He showed it by moving into action on the very day of the invasion. Stalin, rightly called the scared man of the Kremlin, was so overtaken by military disasters, mass desertions from the Red Army (two and a half million) and the utter bankruptcy of his antireligious persecution glaring at him straight in the face, that he did not utter a single public word until two weeks after the attack. Everyone in Russia noticed this and passed bitter comment on the mute conduct of the Soviet Führer, for such is the translation of the term *Vozhd* (leader) given to Stalin by the press that he monopolized.

Soon after this startling new departure of surface friendliness shown to the Church by the Kremlin, there appeared a strange book (1942) entitled The Truth concerning Religion in Russia. Luxuriously presented in sky-blue cloth binding with gold lettering and profusely illustrated, it produced a sensation among the few in Moscow who were allowed to see it. Published in the Russian language along with prayers in Slavonic, it was never shown to the people nor put on sale inside Russia.

It was a formidable and costly propaganda move calculated to counteract abroad the German successes. A typographical error of colossal proportions belatedly corrected, let the cat out of the bag, as regards the true inspiration of this volume, five hundred copies of which were sent to the Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Hewlett Johnson. In very small print, a statement appeared on the last page of this book saying in plain Russian: *"Vouipousk iz antireliguioznoi petchati C. C. C. P.* — Put out by the Antireligious Press of the USSR."

This book contains an introductory document *signed,* if not written, by Metropolitan Sergei, in which it is said: "This book first of all is in answer to the fascist 'crusade,' undertaken as it were, for the sake of 'liberating' our people and our Orthodox Church from the Bolsheviks." The book attempts to demonstrate that the Russian Orthodox Church needed no liberation at the time of the invasion. Everyone in Russia is convinced of the contrary, but no one is allowed to say so. The volume is filled with so much "truth" that it was never shown to the Russian public. It was, however, personally presented to the ambassadors and envoys of Christian nations evacuated to the temporary capital of Kuibyshev, by Metropolitan Nikolai Jaroushewicz.

Pravda, the Communist Party news organ, renowned for its antireligious editorials, like a streak of lightning out of a blue sky, began to lament the destruction of "our holy shrines." It said nothing, of course, of the

thousands upon thousands of churches closed in peacetime, when there was no invasion. Russians well aware of this hypocrisy were indignant, but had no means of showing their feelings. A few months after the war started in Russia, another piece of news elicited nothing but scornful sneers from readers of *Pravda;* it was the announcement that Metropolitan Nikolai had been chosen as a member of the State commission to investigate the wartime destruction of churches.

Almost immediately after being attacked by Hitler, the Soviets released from jail Polish General Anders so that he might recruit the seven divisions of Poles eventually interned in the Soviet Union. These Poles had all been brought to Russia against their will, following the Red Army's stab in the back. The Poles insisted upon and obtained permission to have chaplains for their soldiers. During a press conference in Washington, these events prompted correspondents to ask the late President Roosevelt about religious freedom in the USSR. The late President gave a very unfortunate reply, bolstering Soviet prestige at the cost of truth. Roosevelt told the American press that the Soviet Constitution offered religious guarantees analogous to those contained in the USA Constitution. Immediately this statement was seized upon by S. A. Lozovsky, Commissar for Public Information (*Narkominformburo*) and propagandized throughout unoccupied Russia to the utter scandal of the Russian people.

As another act of positive reaction to the German "crusade," the Soviets allowed the Moscow Patriarchate

to publish a monthly magazine. By that time every single truly religious publication in Russia had been put out of business and had for years already been silent. The once-influential Orthodox Synod's publication had been reduced to an agonizing 4″ x 6″ four-page liturgical calendar. Even that had been carried away by the onrushing waves of persecution that swept over Holy Russia.

The present patriarchal magazine, expected to be a publication of purely religious character, was transformed from the very beginning, in 1943, into an instrument of political propaganda. It is using the prestige of the Orthodox Church, expediently revived by its declared enemy, as a penetrating wedge for the expansion of Communism. In artfully worded articles proclaiming the brotherhood of the Slavic races, it reaches Baltic and Balkan communities and the rest of the world wherever Russian communities exist, there being a great many in the United States. Principally because of extremely careful censorship, the issues are invariably four to five months late. The names appearing in the list of contributors do not necessarily indicate the authors of the published articles. Particularly since 1943, the Orthodox Church, revitalizing itself within rigid limitations, has become more and more subservient to ends having little in common with its primary *raison d'être*. The time has now come to lift the veil of secrecy covering this delicate phase of Russia's contemporary religious history.

Religious "Revival" Aided by Beria's Secret Police

The year 1943 marks a definite turning point in the Kremlin's attitude toward religion in general and the Russian Orthodox Church in particular. The frightful holocaust of World War II contributed powerfully to the crystallizing of Russia's spiritual might, which was then expressing itself with undeniable vigor.

It is incorrect to speak of a religious "revival" in Russia, although the cataclysm of war conditions did much to arouse within the people dormant religious convictions whose outward showing, up to that time, had been systematically suppressed. The regime was openly hostile to religious manifestations of any kind. But right from the war's start, the immense spiritual aspirations of all worshipers in Russia, without distinction of creed, suddenly had a long-sought-for outlet for expression. All available places of worship that had managed to escape destruction or closing down were crammed to capacity. There were not then, and *there are not now* enough churches, mosques and synagogues to satisfy the needs of the throngs seeking to enter.

The signs of tolerance and *laissez-faire* shown by the Kremlin were motivated more by utilitarian expediency than by reasons of acquiescence. The atheistic State was simply forced to reckon with the invisible but real power of religion. Government heads did *not* then modify their views on religion or on worshipers. The best proof of this is contained in a public statement of Mikhail I.

Kalinin, the late wartime President of the USSR, a purely nominal function. Remarking that a large number of Red Army men carried out religious observances, Kalinin urged non-worshipers not to make fun of those who prayed, although, said he: "We look upon religion as an error." Marshal Voroshilov has also been quoted in a statement on religion while addressing a diplomat of an Arab nation who was presenting his letters of credence in 1954. The newly promoted minister of this small nation, having remarked how honored he felt to be standing on an equal footing next to the President of Soviet Russia, heard the latter say: "Before God we are all equal in our littleness." This is the same Voroshilov who once bragged to US Ambassador William C. Bullitt about the shutting up in brothels operated by the State for the Red Army, of the widows, sisters and daughters of captured and slaughtered czarist officers. By no stretch of imagination can such "come-on" quotes be looked upon as serving the interests of truth. They give aid and comfort to God-haters and to a host of declared atheists openly bragging about their immorality and wickedness.

Compelling circumstances of war in Russia produced some really startling results. Something had to be done to populate the practically annihilated hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church. It had become suddenly necessary to prove to the world that the trickling reports about the arrests of metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, archimandrites, deacons, etc., had all been calumnies and malicious inventions against the Soviet regime. The number of

trembling dignitaries of the Church still functioning throughout Russia at the start of Hitler's "crusade" could be counted on the fingers of two hands!

For the purpose of remedying this intolerable situation and at the same time giving the lie to these "calumnies," the Kremlin decided upon a most extraordinary step. Among the immense number of dignitaries, clerics, monks and deacons arrested before 1941, some were thought to be still alive. Where were they? How many were there? Would they be willing, if found, to come to Moscow and offer their services once again to a hastily revitalized Church? Would any bishop living in "free exile" somewhere in the USSR accept reinstatement in his diocese?

As the German "crusade" progressed, accompanied by the spectacular defection from the Moscow Patriarchate of Baltic and Ukrainian churchmen, all above questions were preoccupying the scared Politburo, and Stalin in particular. The very same satraps of State Security who for the previous twenty-five years had concentrated all their efforts on liquidating the clergy, were now assembled in a special department of Beria's NKVD, to try to undo what they had themselves done with such inhuman thoroughness.

Beria's secret-police men thereupon set out on a man hunt of special character, scouring the two hundred and fifty to three hundred concentration camps in remote parts of the USSR, in hopes of finding some still living martyr of the faith. This was all the more difficult, not

only because of war conditions but principally because concentration-camp records and rosters of internees and prisoners are usually badly kept. To understand the incredible chaos and organized disorder affecting millions of political prisoners, quite apart from prisoners of common law, one must know that the *natchalnik* — commanding officer — of such camps is the only person able to say whether Prisoner so and so, designated by a number, is dead or alive. All political prisoners, especially those in forced labor camps, are deprived of their citizenship, internal passport, and all other personal documents. Their names appear on an immense camp roster. With hundreds of armed guards constantly watching, when someone does not answer to a periodic roll call, it usually means that the individual is deadly sick and lying in a filthy lazaret, or that he is already dead. In this latter case, a cross is put next to the man's or woman's name and nothing more is said or done about it. The next of kin are as a rule not notified. This is especially so when, as is commonly the case, the prisoner has been sentenced without benefit of trial, *bez prava perepiski,* i. e., without the right to write or to receive letters.

Such were the prevailing circumstances accompanying the frantic NKVD search ordered by Stalin. Some few Russian Orthodox dignitaries *were* found who had not yet escaped from their misery by death, which is more often looked upon as merciful. The very same torturers who had spent hours upon hours for months at a time in the dungeons of Moscow's central NKVD (now

MVD) prison, forcing signatures to prefabricated "confessions," were now pleading for their victims' return to Moscow. Promises of food, proper housing, car service, clothing, vestments for their churches, telephone service and a hundred other amenities considered normal in any decent country, could not budge the noble stand taken by most of these exiled churchmen. A great number answered that in hatred of Christ and the Church, they had been sent away to rot and die. All they now wanted was to be left alone to die in peace. They would have no part in this hypocritical comedy engineered by the Kremlin God-haters.

All during this time feverish preparations were being made for the election of a Patriarch. Too much time could not be spent in rounding up enough church dignitaries to constitute a numerically presentable quorum for the forthcoming Council. Heaven knows, the NKVD did everything it possibly could to artificially constitute this quorum. There was no time to lose, since Christian, Jewish, and Moslem Church authorities abroad, whose countries were aiding the Russian war effort, were much concerned about the fate of their coreligionists in Russia. Stalin just felt he *had* to build up a front and it had to be built up fast.

It will be remembered that when Patriarch Tykhon was elected in 1917 the Council was attended by 564 delegates from 66 dioceses. Of these, 286 were dignitaries of the Russian Church. Twenty-six years later, the Council of September 8, 1943, had great difficulty in mustering

up thirty delegates. Excluding the few who were already in the Moscow region, this was the pitiful result of the NKVD search into every nook and corner of unoccupied Russia. Of course, more than half of the 564 delegates of the 1917 Council had died from causes that were not all natural. The comparing of these two groups of figures: 564 delegates in 1917, and barely 30 in 1943, numerically summarizes more eloquently than any commentary could do the disastrous consequences of religious persecution during those preceding twenty-six years.

Patriarch Sergei died in 1944, being replaced by Patriarch Alexei, former Metropolitan of Leningrad, elected in 1945. On the occasion of this Council, the Russian Orthodox Church was "permitted" to invite to Moscow all the chief hierarchs of the Balkan and Near-East sister Churches. The hotels of the capital were emptied of their resident Russian guests to make room for the visitors. Their affluence in the streets of Moscow was strikingly reminiscent of old times, said the Muscovites. Fleets of shining new cars were placed at their disposal as they went about their business, all dressed in religious garb. Old janitors and street-sweepers could not believe their eyes. Half jokingly, half seriously, they commented on this unaccustomed spectacle. "*Davnim davno moui etovo nie vidali* — We haven't seen this for a long time" — they kept on saying, tipping their caps, kissing the hands of the archbishops and bishops and asking for their blessing.

For the edification of the visiting hierarchs a surprise concert of sacred music was quickly organized and reported in the press, as though this were a common, ordinary occurrence. The like of this had not been seen or heard since the revolution. Up until that time the ban on religious music in any public place had been complete. Even visiting guest artists from abroad were given to understand that nothing reminiscent of religion in any shape or form should be inserted on their programs. Once a year, however, Mozart's or Verdi's *Requiem* had been heard at the Conservatory Hall.

The Pan-Slavonic Movement

From the very start of the war, the Soviets, backed to the wall, decided nevertheless to derive advantage even from the concessions granted to the Church. Kremlin leaders were quick to perceive the immense political dividends to be obtained for world Communism, particularly in the Near East. For this reason the Pan-Slavonic Movement was cleverly conceived. Its declared purpose was the rallying together of all Brother-Slavs from Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia and other countries whose customs, religious traditions, folklore and languages are so intimately corelated with those of Russia. For that reason also, the Russian Orthodox Church received a vigorous impulse from the Kremlin. The old idea of Moscow serving as the "Third Rome" was resurrected. Ardent Slavophiles smiled with jubilation at the mere thought of old dreams about to be materialized. The

disenchantment of these good souls was pitiful to see when the real motives of the Kremlin began to pierce through the initial enthusiasm. Russians who clearly saw through the maneuver would disgustingly say: *"Eto nitchevo krome obmana* — This is nothing but trickery." The Kremlin was not too inconspicuously hiding behind ecclesiastical personalities who had been included among the directing chiefs, a group in which known atheists figured prominently.

Then there began to appear patriarchal pronouncements echoing the Communist Party line but couched in solemn ecclesiastical language. When important visitors came to the capital from foreign countries, they were invariably brought to the Patriarchate, by that time moved from a former two-room isba, to the spacious quarters of the evacuated German Ambassador's private residence. Stalin's pleadings for a second Allied front were repeated by the Patriarch. These appeals found their way into the Moscow dateline press dispatches of every single foreign correspondent in the capital.

Lend-Lease Linked to Religion in Russia

In September of 1941, less than four months after the German attack on Russia, the United States and British Governments each sent important missions to negotiate with Stalin the sending of war supplies to the Soviet Union, which was already gnawing at the core of its material reserves. Eventually this was to result in a

continual flow of military equipment pouring into war-torn Russia through Murmansk, Vladivostok and the Persian Gulf.

The American Mission was headed by the Honorable Averell Harriman, recent Governor of New York State, with Lord Beaverbrook as his opposite number for the British. Back in this country public opinion was not averse to the idea of helping Russia. But it was also felt that Stalin should be prevailed upon to put an end to religious persecution. Serious objections had been voiced in the USA against all-out help for Stalin, who had shackled the Church almost to the point of extinction.

On the morning of September 30, 1941, the late L. A. Steinhardt, US Ambassador to Moscow, without previous warning, pressingly invited this writer to come and have a talk with Mr. Harriman. This resulted in a seventeen-minute hasty conversation, in which a general picture of the situation was given of the yearnings of the Russian people for complete religious freedom. Was this not the time to obtain a *quid pro quo* from the Soviets in the form of religious guarantees, in exchange for the avalanche of American help about to flow into Russia in convoy after convoy? It goes without saying that the writer was being consulted in no official capacity. He had been called in probably because he had his finger right on the pulse of the Russian people, thanks to his daily contacts. As it later developed, the efforts made to convince the American Mission of the supreme opportunity

of the moment do not seem to have met with any great success. Mr. Harriman barely had time to listen to what was being told him. Immediately after this interview, the American Mission was unfortunately expected at the Kremlin to iron out the details of the military-equipment-and-material needs listed by the Soviets.

The next day the Soviet press published a startling piece of news. It consisted of a half-true, half-false statement made by S. A. Lozovsky, to the effect that a number of religious denominations existed in the Soviet Union, some of these being named. The statement added that the Soviet Government looked upon religion as a private affair, objecting to no denominations or sects as long as they did not carry out counterrevolution. The statement was timed to coincide with the departure of the Anglo-American Lend-Lease negotiators for their respective countries. No sooner had Lord Beaverbrook reached London than he was reported to have said in a public speech: "There is no religious persecution in Russia." In a talk with this writer, the American Ambassador said that an effort had been made to obtain from the Soviet Government a declaration on religion which would at the same time satisfy public opinion back home and save Soviet face. The Ambassador admitted that this Lozovsky statement was a very poor and unsatisfactory result, adding that that was all that could be expected of the Soviet.

The Soviet Government Officially Takes Note of Religion

One month after the election of Patriarch Sergei, *Pravda* published an official TASS communiqué announcing that the Council of Peoples' Commissars had established a State Commission whose function would be that of dealing with religious problems of the Russian Orthodox Church for which government permission was required. G. G. Karpov, a known atheist, was named chairman and is still holding that position today. Whether or not Comrade Karpov's atheism illustrates the cleavage supposedly existing between Church and State is of little importance. As paradoxical as this may seem, it is this chairman, representing the State, who guides the destiny of the Patriarchate in matters quite beyond the material and the practical. In the *New York Times* of February 1, 1956, an article on Church and State in the Soviet Union quotes Karpov as having told Mr. C. L. Sulzberger, author of the article, that his function was to "prevent distortion in the relations of Church and State." Karpov's description of his job is a bland understatement concealing State intrusion in and indirect control of Russian Orthodox Church affairs. Anyone having lived in present-day Russia with a knowledge of the language, and having had contacts with Russians, knows this State interference in religious affairs to be a fact. A laugh-provoking and ludicrous spectacle was to see this atheist chairman appear in church during solemn council assemblies and deliver a

speech in the name of the State. Russians thought the bounds of reverent propriety were offensively overrun when they saw the text of Karpov's utterances published in the magazine of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The establishment of this State Commission for the regulating of Russian Orthodox Church affairs was a historical event. It marked the very first and official public step taken by the Soviets in twenty-six years to "recognize" Russian Orthodoxy. An important observation must be made here that the original Decree of January 23, 1918, still remained in force. Nor can it under any circumstance be looked upon today as a dead letter. Articles 1 and 12 respectively read: "The Church is separated from the State. No church or religious society enjoys the right of property. Nor does it enjoy the right of juridical personality."

With all the thought-twisting and distortions to which we are exposed in Soviet phraseology, the incompatibility here is striking between what is said in one breath and denied in another, with regard to one and the same thing. No sane mind has ever been able to do away with the universally accepted principle of contradiction and to expect a contradictory statement to make sense.

It was not until July 1, 1944, that all other non-Orthodox faiths of Russia became the object of similar attention on the part of the Government. On that day, *Pravda* published another announcement, here translated in full:

"By decision of the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the USSR, there has been organized within the USSR Sovnarkom, a Commission for affairs of religious cults, for the purpose of establishing liaison between the Government of the USSR and the heads of religious societies: Gregorian-Armenian, Old Believers, Catholics, Greek-Catholics, the Lutheran Church, the Moslem, Judaic, Buddhist faiths and sectarian organizations for problems of these cults requiring the permission of the USSR Government. Comrade I. V. Polyansky has been named chairman of the Commission for affairs of religious cult at the USSR Sovnarkom." (TASS)

In theory at least, all religions are equal. So the law says. But in the Soviet Union what the law stipulates and what is done in practice are two different things. The mere naming of such faiths as the Lutheran, Judaic, Catholic, Moslem, etc., does not indicate that the thousands of their destroyed or closed places of worship have now been rebuilt or reopened. The quasi-totality of Protestant churches forced out of existence prior to the 1944 Decree remained closed in Russia proper, outside the insignificantly few in Moscow. These came back to life only under the impact of Hitler's "crusade," against which the Kremlin was constrained to react, for reasons already seen. Moscow is only too happy to have such places to show to foreign delegations. Moscow, meaning the Kremlin, uses newsreel cameras and sound track to the hilt for propaganda purposes every time such deputations come to visit. Likewise, the fact that the "Renovated" or

"Living Church" is not named in the Decree of July 1, 1944, does not mean that this faction, popularly called the Red Church, exists no more. Although the Kremlin encouraged defections from this organization (acting in direct opposition to its 1923 policy) in order to strengthen the Moscow Patriarchate when the Soviet regime sorely needed it (in 1943), the age-old political tactic of "divide and rule" has never been abandoned by the Praesidium — new name for the old Politburo.

Whereas the czarist regime had one Procurator General who openly supervised all cults, the Soviets, professing in theory to be completely separated from the Church, now have two such Procurators General. One is exclusively for the Orthodox religion and the other is for the non-Orthodox faiths. Readers might be interested in knowing that the headquarters of Ivan V. Polyansky, who directs the Commission for non-Orthodox Religious Affairs, are established in Moscow.

How New Is the Soviet Religious "New Look"?

Ivan V. Polyansky, named above, gave this writer the most emphatic assurance that no change whatsoever existed in the seventy-eight Articles of the codified Soviet religious legislation. In other words, the Decree establishing the Commission of which he is the head for non-Orthodox Religious Affairs changed absolutely nothing in the existing laws. The same thing applies to the Russian Orthodox Church, though a great deal more latitude is given it. The years that have elapsed since 1945 and

the events that have happened in the Russian religious world have amply confirmed the maintenance of the Soviet Government's hostile attitude to religion in general.

From time to time, *Pravda, Izvestia* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* have reverted to their editorial attacks. While these attacks were not made against designated church dignitaries by name, as was customary previous to World War II, they have been a resumption of the Soviet campaigns against "religious superstition." In many cities of the Soviet Union desecrated churches, once used as antireligious museums and hastily closed at the time of Hitler's "crusade," are now reopened with modified but still grotesque anti-God exhibits.

The League of Militant Atheists, supposedly dissolved since World War II, has taken on a "new look." It now operates more subtly under the new name of the All-Union Society for the Diffusion of Political and Scientific Knowledge. Under this pompous title it continues to attack religion, not only in the USSR but also in the USA. One of these "new look" pamphlets published at State expense accuses the Church in the US of being the instrument of Wall Street and of American capitalism. Protestant and Catholic men of the cloth are "scientifically" demonstrated to be propagators of "religious obscurantism."

Unquestionably there is a "new look" in the Soviet Government's attitude toward religion. But it is of the kind described here. It is more of the same, minus the

openly offensive methods resorted to prior to the German invasion.

Propagandawise, the Kremlin continues to reap the rich benefits of its changing tactics, partly because the world secular press, as pointed out by Pius XI in his encyclical on Atheistic Communism, closes its columns to the immense tragedy of religious oppression in Russia. The Holy Father called attention to the powerful factor which this conspiracy constitutes in the diffusion of Communism. It is indeed a conspiracy. Otherwise, how can anyone explain the fact that news agencies, professionally eager to publish daily human-interest stories from all the corners of the globe, have remained silent about the accumulated horrors of Communism's battle against God? To quote from Pius XI's masterful *Divini Redemptoris* on the evils of Communism: "This silence is due in part to shortsighted political policy, and is favored by various occult forces which for a long time have been working for the overthrow of the Christian social order."

It is the Lord Himself who warns us that "The children of this world . . . are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke 16, 8, Douay version). If we bear this divinely inspired declaration in mind, an important but sad illustration will show how the Kremlin's neo-religious policy, entering into its general "new look," exemplifies this Gospel truth.

When Kremlin atheists began reviving religion during World War II, in direct reply to and in order to offset Hitler's "crusade," hastily reinstated churchmen of various

denominations in Moscow were suddenly given access to media of mass appeal and communications. Press columns, interviews, radio talks, trips outside the Soviet Union were surprisingly facilitated, encouraged and actually organized for these clerics, with the full sanction and help of atheistic Communists. Very shortly afterward, even before the war's end, there arrived in Moscow an apparently innocuous reporter representing news agencies in Toronto, Canada and New York City. This man made it his solemn professional duty to interview at great length every single church leader in the capital with the exception of this writer, the sole remaining Catholic priest officiating in the entire Soviet Union. The reporter in question, by the name of Raymond Arthur Davis, was soon cabling thousands of Moscow-datelined words based on these interviews. Every single statement made by his interlocutors was in praise of the Communists, who were at that time showering Russian churchmen with extraordinary solicitude. Yes, there had been some regrettable excesses during the revolution, but was this not normal, with the masses rising up against czarist and bourgeois oppression? Was there or had there been any persecution? No, that was wild talk coming from the "enemies of the people." Were churches operating in Moscow and elsewhere in Soviet Russia? Why, all the correspondent had to do was to come and look for himself. Did the Church need any liberation from atheistic Communism as Dr. Goebbels kept repeating over the German international radio network? No, that was just Nazi propaganda. Had

not Metropolitan Sergei, then guardian of the Patriarchal Throne, refuted all these malicious sayings? Besides this, the now deceased Simeon A. Lozovsky (alias Dridzo), chief of the wartime *Sovinformburo,* along with TASS, was feeding veritable cock-and-bull stories to this reporter, who was supplying an agency in the United States specializing in news of a religious character. The "children of this world" were truly "making hay" while these lies and half-truths were reaching all the capitals of the world.

Foreign newsmen in Moscow at the time refused to exercise suggested caution in dealing with Raymond Arthur Davis, brushing off the hint of suspicion by replying that he was just another correspondent like themselves. Only when Davis' job was thoroughly completed to the advantage of "the children of this world," did it become known that this reporter had finally been arrested in Canada by the Canadian Mounted Police. It was then discovered, but only after all this incalculable harm had been done, that Davis, a Canadian Jew and member of the Communist Party, had been traveling under an assumed name with a false passport. Popular and oftentimes naïve credulity in the Communist "new look" throughout the world owes much of its success to Raymond Arthur Davis, erstwhile Moscow correspondent. When the interests of the Church are not thwarted by the conspiracy of silence, they are plagued by a torrent of "news" dispatches protecting Kremlin prestige in the manner here described from eyewitness experience. Ella

Winter, formerly Moscow correspondent of the *pro tempore* defunct *Daily Worker,* also contributed largely to credulity in the Soviet religious "new look," with this difference: that her dispatches were not cabled under a false flag, since readers knew what to expect from an advocate of Communism.

Misrepresented Kremlin Pronouncements on Religion

When a public statement is made by a Kremlin official calling for a stop to the open vexation of religious sentiment, this does not mean that Communists have changed their minds about God, religion and worshipers. It simply indicates that they are carrying out directives set forth in the Communist Party rules and regulations. Communist intent and purpose regarding religion remain exactly the same. In the frequent instances of political "deviationism" noted among Communist camps because of the unforgettable Hungarian uprising of 1956, there is no record of a change of heart having taken place on the score of religion, in any of the Kremlin-dominated satellites. Mao Tse-tung of Red China, Maurice Thorez of the French Communist Party with E. Togliatti of Italy, Gomulka of Poland, Tito in Yugoslavia and so many others all understand each other and are pulling together. Under the guise of national characteristics which superficially conceal godlessness, they work hand in hand to stamp out God and religion. Why is this? Because Party rules require it. This dictate is of paramount importance to all true Communists. Thirty-one

years ago Stalin told an American delegation in effect that such an incongruity as a half-Communist cannot possibly exist. To be more precise, here are Stalin's words: "There are instances when some one or other member of the Party hinders the general development of antireligious propaganda. If such Party members are excluded, then that is very well, for there is no room for such 'Communists' in the Party ranks." (J. V. Stalin, *Voprosi Leninizma* [*Problems of Leninism*], 9th Russian prototype edition, Partinoi Izdateltsvo, Moskva, 1933)

The Communist attitude toward religion is irrevocably engraved in the Party Program, which many journalists and news commentators would do well to consult before proclaiming, as they unfortunately did, that the Kremlin was "liberalizing" its views on religious faith.

The unchanged Party Program concerning religion, translated from the Russian original, is here reproduced in full:

> "With regard to religion, the Communist Party does not satisfy itself with the already-decreed separation of Church from State and of the school from the Church — i. e., with measures which bourgeois democracy proclaims in its programs but which were carried out nowhere in the world, thanks to the many actual links existing between capitalism and religious propaganda.
>
> "The Communist Party is guided by the conviction that only the fulfillment of the developed consciousness of the masses in all socio-economical activities can

bring about a full dying away of religious prejudices. The Party strives toward a full destruction of the link existing between the exploiting classes and the organizing of religious propaganda. The Party works for the actual liberation of the toiling masses from religious prejudices and organizes the widest scientific-instructive antireligious propaganda. *However, it is necessary to carefully avoid every kind of insult against the sentiments of worshipers because this would lead only to an intensification of religious fanaticism*" [italics ours]. (*Partizdat* — Program and Rules of the Communist Party, Moscow, 1936, Russian edition)

The mere reading of this official text, very little known in the Western world, throws much-needed light on the true meaning of the so-called Kremlin's "new look" in religious matters. The reader may need to be informed that in Soviet jargon the expression "religious prejudices" means religion, belief in God, or adherence to supernatural faith. It is a phraseology constantly employed in a pejorative sense, meant to throw discredit on religion and believers in general. As though by mutual accord, this offensive manner of referring to religious belief has been used by Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Yaroslavsky and, of course, all the hacks writing for antireligious publications.

Not only does the crass materialism of Communist "philosophy" appear in all its repulsive nakedness, but the persistent will of Communist atheism to do away with divine worship is affirmed for all who have eyes to see.

Let no one argue that the Communist world-outlook on religion has been modified or, far less, that it has been suppressed since Andrei Zhdanov's revision of the Party apparatus in the years 1947-48. That would be equivalent to saying and believing that Stalin's signature in May of 1943 really put the Comintern out of business, when everyone knows that it was "revamped" by the establishment of the Cominform. Both names have now disappeared, it is true; but it is also true that the Communist International has never ceased to exist and give out orders to its world affiliates.

In the year 1941, on the eve of Hitler's "crusade," which had the advantage of shutting up at least for a time all the anti-God Soviet pseudo-intellectuals, their chief vociferating "academician," Emilian Yaroslavsky, wrote: "Starting from the premise that religion will not die of itself, our Party is organizing the widest possible scientific teaching along lines of antireligious propaganda through books, newspapers, lectures, talks and radio broadcasts. Our program warns all Communists to avoid offending the religious sentiment of worshipers, because such ridicule conduces to an intensification of religious belief."

Communism's Monolithic Anti-God Collectivity

Prior to Khrushchev's Kremlin shuffle in June of 1957, the big boast for foreign consumption dealt with the complete accord, the perfect harmony of view, and absolute unity said to be existing in the Party's powerhouse,

known as the Praesidium. Then came the ousting of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and Shepilov, as unexpected "proof" of this unity. Soon after, Marshal Zhukov, nominal head only of the Red armed forces, was shown the way out, to be followed by Bulganin's unceremonious expulsion from the ringside seat that all of Khrushchev's colleagues had warmed for so long. Kremlin big brass may have disagreed on political issues, but they were of one mind in attacking religion. That is the one area in which all Party members agree.

What Kalinin said about religion being considered an "error" by the State demonstrates to what extent belief in God is allowed to remain the private affair of each citizen in dictatorial Soviet Russia. Stalin made one of his false statements to an American delegation in 1927 when he told them: "The law of the country is that each citizen has the right to profess any given faith. That is a matter pertaining to each one's conscience." S. A. Lozovsky issued a statement to the world press in 1941 to the effect that the State regarded religion as a private affair, carefully omitting *at that time* to say anything about the methods employed for "discouraging" divine belief, to use a handy Soviet euphemism. Lozovsky's affirmation and all other pronouncements of deceased and living Communist leaders on the Soviet attitude toward religion, are qualified lies.

One important observation imposes itself in this line of thought. It is the utter lack of originality manifest

among atheistic Communists in speaking about God. Nowhere in Soviet "literature" is such repetitious, thought-stifling monotony to be found. Even the "new look" betrays the wearisome sameness of minds, literally hell-bent on pulling souls away from their Creator. Khrushchev differs in no way from the beacons of proletarian enlightenment that preceded him at the helm. This was illustrated with penetrating poignancy when Bob Considine, accompanying William Randolph Hearst, Jr., and Frank Conniff, interviewed Khrushchev at Communist Party headquarters in Moscow, in November of 1957.

Khrushchev Speaks on God and Religion

The three above-named journalists caught the Kremlin oracle off guard in a series of well-prepared questions culminating on religion. Full credit must be given to these newsmen for pulling the trigger at the right moment, to produce, as Frank Conniff himself wrote, a "minimum of propaganda and a maximum of fact."

What touched off a chain series of Khrushchevian megaton blasts against God was a carefully phrased question coming from Bob Considine. Quoting from Frank Conniff's own story, here is the query: "Mr. First Secretary, you have made several references to God, the human soul, and spiritual freedom under Communism. How is it that any man who might believe in all these things is denied advancement in the Communist Party?" Khrushchev replied: "Because the situation is incompatible. We are atheists. Certainly we use the name of God,

as in 'God's truth.' But it is only a habit. . . . We are atheists, but we have a tolerant attitude toward all people. But if the acceptance of religion is intermingled with political activity that works against the Communist Party, that is different. If they [certain people] interfere, in regard to political activity, that is against our Constitution. We are not going to fight for God's body. We don't fight for a coffin so that other coffins will cover the globe. That's what the Crusades were fought for."

There are other pearls of exceptional luster to be picked from Khrushchev's demonstration of crass ignorance. What has been quoted is sufficient to bring out once more the down-to-earth mentality of a political parrot caught in the trap of a slippery question which Khrushchev's uneducated though intelligent mind was ragingly unable to cope with. The Kremlin boss' reaction was sought for and obtained in an avalanche of incoherent vituperations in which the dominant Communist objection to God pierces with startling lucidity. The intrinsic incompatibility between belief in a spiritual but no less real God and the hopeless utilitarian world-outlook of the Kremlin leader provokes more pity than indignation.

At another moment of that interview, replying to Mr. Hearst, Khrushchev said: "We Communists, the Soviet politicians, are atheists." This statement should be clarified, because in all the Soviet Union there is no such thing as a "politician" in the sense that this word is used to designate a political personality wielding power in opposition to another personality from an opposing party

or faction. During the last forty years and more of the Communist regime, there have not been any politicians, nor can there ever be any as long as the system continues to exist in its present form. The Kremlin has had only power wielders, satraps and totalitarian dictators whose methods make czarist imperial autocracy appear childish by comparison. The same might be said of Khrushchev's cruelty and renowned brutality before stepping into Stalin's shoes. Khrushchev's tolerance toward people while "pacifying" the Ukraine in the thirties won him the unenviable title of "*krovozhadny palatch* — bloodthirsty executioner." Khrushchev added another gem to his butcher's crown when *he,* and not Marshal Zhukov, ordered the massacre of Hungary's fighters for freedom.

Khrushchev's atheism cannot be said to be personal, strictly speaking. He wields absolute power collectively, in the name of the Central Executive Committee and more particularly as boss of the Praesidium, the pyramidal summit of Soviet power. This does not, however, imply that he is not the Napoleonic master of the entire Kremlin council. It would be vastly interesting to know Khrushchev's answer to the question: How many Russians believe in God? It is he who revealed membership in the Communist Party to be 6,760,000, in a population certainly exceeding 200,000,000. It is reasonable to assume that Party members are all atheists. Roughly speaking, that leaves 192,000,000 Russians, of whom more than half are worshipers, to be generously conservative.

Unquestionably the Kremlin leader was on the defensive during that historical interview. He behaved with the verbal violence of an ensnared brute. Leaving aside his irrational diatribes, which were irrelevant to the question originally asked, we find one important element remaining. It is the reaffirmed principle whereby atheistic Communism *a priori* excludes God and divine concepts from Party pursuits. Here we have Khrushchev's own words, unequivocally expressing an irreparable severance between Communism and Christianity or any other adherence to religious belief. Is it not preposterous to see how Khrushchev's previous statements on religion at the Yugoslav Embassy reception in 1954 have been misinterpreted to indicate a more conciliatory attitude for the millions of Russians who still must be the butt of State discrimination, because they are known to worship?

Totalitarianism necessarily breeds terrorism. Soviet terrorism does not show itself only in Serov's concentration camps, corrective labor, exile, imprisonment and firing-squad executions like that of Imre Nagy of Hungary. Terrorism of the mind, heart and soul to a far deeper degree enslaves a people against whose religious convictions Communist atheists align themselves with diabolical obstinacy, all the while proclaiming neutrality. Such barbaric violence against what man holds most sacred is a natural consequence of an unprincipled system of the kind Communism reveals itself to be in reality. Regardless of all the "liberalizing" the Western press is prone to credit the Kremlin with in its improperly digested

Khrushchev quotes, the incompatibility between Communism and Christianity stares one straight in the face. No one will dare contradict the Holy Father, speaking with unquestionable moral authority when he says: "In such a doctrine [Communism], as is evident, there is no room for the idea of God; there is no difference between matter and spirit, between soul and body; there is neither survival of the soul after death nor any hope in a future life. Insisting on the dialectical aspect of their materialism, the Communists claim that the conflict which carries the world toward its final synthesis can be accelerated by man. Hence they endeavor to sharpen the antagonisms which arise between the various classes of society. Thus the class struggle with its consequent violent hate and destruction takes on the aspect of a crusade for the progress of humanity. On the other hand, all other forces whatsoever, as long as they resist such systematic violence, must be annihilated as hostile to the human race."

A Plea for Solidarity among Worshipers

The overwhelming might of religious faith in Russia, regardless of denomination, should produce within our own selves a corporate conviction of true international solidarity. To the empty-sounding call of Communism: "Workers of the world, unite!" ours is a universal call for unity in the Gospel sense predicted by the Lord: "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring. And they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

If Khrushchev's ears are deaf to that call from up on high, those of the worshiping Russian people are wide open. From pastoral experience, while dealing daily for twelve years with innumerable Russians from all walks of life in sickness, death, birth, mirth and sorrow; in city, town and village; in isbas, apartment houses, collective farms and hospitals; in cemeteries, homes and churches; and above all in the intimacy of the uninhibited mystic Russian soul, this writer can tell Khrushchev and the entire world that atheistic Communism is dead and bankrupt though not yet buried. The time is perhaps not far away when its universal stench will force it where it belongs. It will go the way of previous socio-religious errors of contemporary times.

Looking to us with hopeful aspirations, our Russian Christian brethren are still holding up the banner of their spiritual convictions, notwithstanding anything Khrushchev tells foreign reporters. Is it not time for the world outside Russia to realize that after all Khrushchev speaks only in the name of a numerically insignificant clique of throat throttlers keeping upwards of twenty million Russians in the strait jacket duress of concentration camps?

There are numerous cracks in the Kremlin wall and innumerable fissures in the curtain of secrecy concealing Soviet Russia's human tragedy — a tragedy which has been incompetently reported by a world press shackled by censorship and undue political concern. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). This is the Lord's admonition, in which our

Russian believing brethren are putting all their trust. They look to us for moral support, the only force that can sustain them.

In the light of these considerations, would it not be proper for all of us to call down divine guidance on our leaders, that clear, unadulterated truth, once known and divorced from political intrigue, may lead them on to constructive policies in the quest of peace, security and freedom for all mankind? The time has now come for all God-fearing statesmen to give proof of a forthright stand in the face of this Communist godless world onslaught. It is only by seeing through and counteracting the maneuvers of Kremlin ill-will activities that we shall safeguard the swelling ranks of men of good will who are fervently seeking peace in justice.